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James Lenox



James Lence







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THE HISTORY OF
THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST.

VOLUME THE SECOND :

CONTAINING
THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES.



BY THE LATE
REV. JOSEPH MILNER, A.M.

WITH ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS BY THE
REV^d. ISAAC MILNER, D.D. F.R.S.
DEAN OF CARLISLE,
AND PRESIDENT OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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P R E F A C E.

THE period of time, which the Volume now presented to the Reader embraces, will exhibit the Church of Christ in a very different situation from any, in which it appeared, during the whole course of the three first Centuries.

The fourth Century opens with a persecution more systematically planned, and more artfully conducted, than those which Christians had ever known. Indeed victory at first showed itself in favour of the persecutors, and Christianity seemed to be near an end. All the powers of cruelty and artifice, and of violence and calumny, associated, were exerted to the utmost in the course of these transactions; and, if the Church still survived the storm, and rose more terrible from her losses, the only reason was, because her DEFENDER is invincible.

We next behold the Church established and protected by civil polity, and the whole system of Paganism, which had been the pride of ages, gradually dissolved, and sinking into insignificance and contempt. The advantages and abuses, attendant on Christian Establishments, display themselves, on this occasion, in a very conspicuous point of view. I have endeavoured, with faithfulness and candour, to point out both; at the same time that the regard

due to truth itself, and to the characters of the most illustrious and the most exemplary Christians in past ages, seemed to require a defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments. I hope no real lover of truth and liberty will censure the attempt: for it must be owned, that the most direct attacks, in the way of argument, and I wish I could say only in that way, have repeatedly been made against them, as if they were unchristian in their whole nature. It cannot, therefore, be reckoned unfair to desire men, freely to give to others the liberty which they allow to themselves, if they would prove that their love of liberty is genuine and sincere.

The Arian controversy nearly fills the rest of the Century; it was my duty to give a faithful history of its rise, progress, and effects. And, if the personal character of Arians appear more criminal than many of my readers have been taught to imagine, I confidently refer them to the most authentic records of antiquity. I am not conscious of having disguised any one fact, or exaggerated any one enormity.

But it is with far greater pleasure, that I have contemplated the fifth Century. The history of Pelagianism I judged to be a desideratum in our language; it was necessary to lay it before the reader with some degree of circumstantial exactness, supported too by incontestible documents. If the account of the writings and labours of Augustine be thought to extend to an immoderate length, I can only say, that the importance of the doctrines of GRACE, with their practical effects, will, perhaps, be considered as a sufficient apology. Nothing can be introduced more pertinent to the whole design of this History, than the revival of religion, of which he was the providential instrument: its effects remained for many centuries: and I scarcely need say to those, who have read the former Volume even with super-

PREFACE.

v.

ficial attention, that my plan often requires me to be brief, where other historians are immoderately tedious ; and to be circumstantial, where they say little, or are silent altogether.

To search out the real Church from age to age, is indeed a work of much labour and difficulty ; far more so, I apprehend, than can even be conceived by those whose studies have never been directed to this object. The ore is precious, but it must be extracted from incredible heaps of heterogeneous matter. I cannot pretend to be clear of mistakes ; but it behoved me to be as careful as I could ; and I shall thankfully receive information or correction from studious persons who have carefully investigated antiquity for themselves. I cannot, indeed, expect information or correction from self-created critics, who are carried down the torrent of modern prejudices, and who know no sentiments, but those which they have imbibed from Authors of the present Century.

The encouragement which I have received from a generous Public induces me to persevere. Besides, the peculiar advantage of a work of this kind is, that it is capable of perfection, so far as it proceeds, without needing any support from subsequent parts. It is not like a connected thread of argumentation, which must be read throughout, before the full force of any particular portion of it be discerned.

What real Christianity is, I mean to exhibit historically ; and, in the execution of this plan, I hope I shall be found not altogether to have disappointed the expectations of the University of Cambridge. I reflect with peculiar satisfaction, that the University, to which I am now so much indebted for liberal support in the publication of this Work, and in which several of my earlier years were spent in useful studies,

was, under Divine Providence, the principal instrument*, of spreading through these kingdoms at the Reformation, that very light of Evangelical doctrine, which it is the capital object of this History to explore.

* See Burnet's History of the Reformation, and Strype's Lives of the Archbishops, *passim*.

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CENTURY IV.

CHAP. I.

THE PERSECUTION OF DIOCLESIAN.

THE last Century concluded with some symptoms of a storm ready to burst on the Church, which had long been in a state of ease and prosperity, and was at the same time deeply declined from the purity and simplicity of the Gospel. Besides the martyrdom of Marcellus in Africa*, an attempt had been made in a more general, and yet in a covert manner, to corrupt the army. It was put to the option of Christian officers, whether they would offer sacrifice, and enjoy their dignity, or refuse and be deprived. Many were desirous of retiring into private life, to avoid the trial. Many however showed a sincere regard to the kingdom of Christ, and contentedly lost their preferment. Some few were put to death for a terror to the rest. But the general persecution, which afterwards destroyed such numbers, was withheld for some time†. In this prelude, which has been mentioned above, and of which we have only a dark and imperfect account, something of the political manœuvres of Dioclesian seems conspicuous. It is evident that after he had so long favoured the Christians, he had now contracted a prejudice against them, though at first he made use of artifice rather than violence.

CENT.
IV.

* See C. XVII. of last Century, Vol. I.

† Euseb. B. VIII. C. IV.

CHAP.

I.

Galerius
and Con-
stantius.

A. D.
302.

This emperor had an associate called Maximian, and they had under them two Cæsars, Galerius and Constantius. The last-mentioned only of the four was a person of probity and humanity. The other three were tyrants, though the savageness of Galerius was the most remarkable. He met Dioclesian at Nicomedia, where he usually kept his court, in the winter, in the nineteenth year of his reign, and in the year of our Lord 302, and determined, if possible, to instigate him to measures against the Christians, still more sanguinary and decisive*. This man had a mother extremely bigotted to paganism, who almost every day employed herself in sacrifices. The Christians about her refused to partake of the idolatrous feasts, and gave themselves up to fasting and prayer. Hence her mind was incensed against the whole body, and she stimulated her son, who was as superstitious as herself, to seek their destruction. A whole winter Dioclesian and Galerius were engaged in secret counsels. The latter proposed a general persecution; the former remonstrated against the impolicy of such sanguinary measures, and was for limiting the persecution to the officers of the court and the soldiers. Finding himself unable to stem the fury of Galerius, he called a council of a few judges and officers. Some gave it as their opinion, that the Christians should in general be put to death; and others, induced by fear or flattery, assented. Still Dioclesian was averse, and through policy or superstition determined to consult the oracle of Apollo at Miletus. Apollo answered, as it might be expected, in a manner friendly to the views of Galerius. Staggered with repeated importunities, the old emperor still hesitated, and could not be persuaded to attempt the demolition of Christianity by bloodshed; whereas Galerius was desirous to burn alive those who refused to sacrifice to the heathen gods.

* Lactantius de M. P.

The feast of the Terminalia was the day appointed to commence the operations against the Christians. Early in the morning, an officer with guards came to the great church at Nicomedia, and bursting open the doors, sought for the image of God. So says my author; though if this be not a mere flourish of rhetoric, they must have been strangely ignorant of the sentiments of the followers of Jesus. The Scriptures which were found were burnt; every thing was given to plunder. While all things were in this confusion, the two emperors, looking at the scene from the palace, were long in doubt whether they should order the edifice to be burnt. The prudent opinion of Dioclesian at length prevailed, who feared the effect of a conflagration on the neighbouring buildings. The Pretorian soldiers were therefore sent with axes and other iron tools, and in a few hours levelled the whole building with the ground.

The next day an Edict appeared, by which men of the Christian religion, of whatever rank or degree, were deprived of all honour and dignity; were exposed to torture; and every one might have justice against them; whilst they were debarred the benefit of the laws in all cases without exception*. Thus was the Christian world at once exposed to all possible insults without redress. The spirit of man

Edict
against the
Christians.

* In a passage, which seems to be misplaced by some mistake, Eusebius observes, that in the 19th year of Dioclesian, edicts were every where suddenly published, by which it was ordered, that churches should be levelled with the ground, the sacred books consumed by fire, persons of dignity disgraced, common people made slaves if they persisted in Christianity. Not long after, says he, other letters were published, by which it was enacted, that all the bishops every where should first be cast into bonds, and afterwards be compelled by every method to sacrifice. These measures of the court increasing gradually in asperity and horror, show that it was not without reluctance, that Dioclesian was induced to consent to an universal carnage, though he too well agreed with Galerius in forming a system for the extinction of the Christian name.

naturally revolts against injustice so flagrant, and a Christian was found hardy enough, under the transports of indignation, to pull down and tear the Edict. He was burned alive for his indiscretion, and bore his sufferings with admirable, and it is to be hoped, with Christian patience.

Some time after, a part of the palace was found to be on fire : the Christians were charged with the fact : and the eunuchs of the house were accused. Dioclesian himself was present, and saw his servants burnt in the flames. It is remarkable, that the servants of Galerius were not put to the torture ; while he himself took much pains to keep up the indignation of the old emperor. After fifteen days a second fire broke out, and Galerius left the palace in a hurry, expressing his fear of being burnt alive. Lactantius, without hesitation, charges all this to the artifices of Galerius,

The Persecution of Dioclesian began A. D. 303, in the 20th year of this Emperor ; and is the Xth Persecution of the Christians.

Dioclesian now thoroughly in earnest, raged against all sorts of men who bore the Christian name, and obliged among others his wife and daughter to sacrifice. Doubtless he suspected them at least of a secret regard for Christianity. Presbyters and deacons were seized and condemned in a summary way to death. Eunuchs of the greatest power in the palace were slain, and persons of every age and sex were burnt. It was tedious to destroy men singly ; fires were made to burn numbers together, and men with millstones fastened about their necks were thrown into the sea. Judges were every where at work in compelling men to sacrifice. The prisons were full. Unheard-of tortures were invented ; and, to prevent the possibility of Christians obtaining justice, altars were placed in courts, at which plaintiffs were obliged to sacrifice, before their cause could be heard. The other two emperors were directed by letters to proceed in the same violent course. Maximian, who governed in Italy, obeyed with savage alacrity. Constantius with

reluctance demolished the churches, while he preserved the persons of Christians.

The persecution pervaded the whole Roman world, except France, where the mild Constantius ruled; and from east to west, to use the language of Lactantius, three monsters of horrible ferocity raged.

I am aware, that a laborious attempt has been made to depreciate the accounts of this persecution. If I think it needless to relate distinctly all the sufferings of Christians under it, I must not however be supposed to countenance such attempts. The agreement of Lactantius and Eusebius, both contemporary authors of credit, is apparent. That such edicts were published, that they were strictly enforced, that a systematical and serious design of extinguishing the Gospel was formed, these things are certain. Even if we had no particular martyrologies extant, we might be assured from circumstances, that much blood must have been spilt, and much misery endured, not only in a regular and legal way, but also by tumultuary violence, and by the malice of men combined against a set of persons deprived universally of the protection of the laws. There wanted not some instances of humanity and generosity in Pagans towards their Christian friends and relations. But whoever knows, what the passions of men are capable of, when set afloat and suffered to act without check or control, will not doubt, that the sufferings of Christians in this period must have been far greater than can be related by any historian. Thus did God at once punish their sins, revive his work in their hearts by sanctified affliction, evidence the extreme depravity of mankind, and above all, illustrate his own power and wisdom in baffling the rage of Satan*, and in defending and delivering

* Let not the reader startle, because I ascribe the persecutions of the Church to Satanic influence. The following Scriptures

his Church, when every thing seemed combined for its destruction. Should any be inclined to pay more regard to the testimonies of heathens than of Christians, let them hear Libanius, the friend of Julian the apostate, who thus speaks in his funeral oration on that emperor. “ They who adhered to a corrupt religion (he means the Christian) were in great terrors, and expected that their eyes would be plucked out, that their heads would be cut off, and that rivers of their blood would flow from the multitude of slaughters. They apprehended their new Master would invent new kinds of torments, in comparison of which, mutilation, sword, fire, drowning, being buried alive, would appear but slight pains. For the preceding emperors had employed against them all these kinds of punishments.” He goes on to commend Julian, for using milder methods. Two pillars in Spain were also monuments of the systematic cruelty of this persecution, on one of which was this inscription : “ Dioclesian, Jovian, Maximian Herculeus, Cæsares Augusti, for having extended the Roman empire in the East and West, and for having extinguished the name of Christians, who brought the Republic to ruin.” On the other this : “ Dioclesian, &c. for having adopted Galerius in the East, for having every where abolished the superstition of Christ, for having extended the worship of the gods.” And to name only one more evidence, the cruelty must have been egregious, which could have induced the persecutors to strike the medal of Dioclesian,

carefully compared together, seem abundantly to warrant such a sentiment. John viii. 38—44. 1 Thess. ii. 18. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. 1 John iii. 8—13. Revel. throughout. To these the evangelical reader may easily add many more. Moreover, as the description of the influences of the Holy Spirit form an essential part of this History, it seems to fall in with my plan, to bring into view from time to time, the counterpart of the said influences, which is undoubtedly the agency of Satan.

which still remains, with this inscription, "The name of Christians being extinguished*."

Supported by such authorities against the unreasonableness of modern scepticism, we may proceed in the detail of facts. There were some ministers of the palace of the highest rank and nobility, who were yet found to prefer the reproach of Christ to all worldly grandeur. The martyrdom of Peter, one of the emperor's household, is very remarkable. He was brought before the emperor in Nicodemia, and was scourged with excessive severity. As he refused to sacrifice, though his bones were made bare by the stripes, a mixture of vinegar and salt was poured on his limbs; and this being still to no purpose, he was gradually burnt to death. Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and many others, who served in the palace, after a variety of sufferings, were strangled. Anthimus, the Bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded, and with him a great multitude of martyrs suffered. Men and women leaped on the funeral piles with alacrity: With the persecution the spirit of martyrdom was revived in the church. In every place the prisons were filled with bishops and other Christian ministers, and no room was reserved for felons. Martyrs were put to death in every province. Africa and Mauritania, Thebais, and Egypt throughout, abounded with them. Five persons of this last country Eusebius speaks of, whom he had known in Palestine and Phœnicia. He himself saw them suffering under the scourge, or exposed to enraged wild beasts, and celebrates their admirable patience. One of them, scarcely twenty years of age, stood without bonds, with his hands stretched out in a praying posture, exposed to bears and leopards, which were backward to perform the bloody task assigned them.

* *Nomine Christianorum deletio.* See *Bullet's Establishment, &c.* EUSEB. B. VIII.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH:

CHAP.

I.

A bull which had been stimulated by hot iron applied to him, tossed with his horns and tore his employers; and it was with some difficulty that beasts were found to execute the purposes of the persecution.

Persecu-
tions in
Egypt.

Egypt suffered extremely. Whole families were put to various kinds of death; some by fire, others by water, others by decollation, after horrible tortures. Some perished by famine, others by crucifixion, and of these, some in the common manner, others were fastened with their heads downward, and preserved alive, that they might die by hunger. But the torments in Thebais exceed all description. Women tied by one foot, were raised up on high, and exposed naked, monuments at once of the inhumanity and indecency of the persecution. Others were torn by the distorted boughs of trees; and these scenes continued some years. Sometimes ten, at other times, thirty, and sixty, and once a hundred men and women with their little ones, in one day, were murdered by various torments.

Our author himself, while in Egypt, saw many executed* in one day, some beheaded, others burnt; so that both the executioners were quite fatigued, and their weapons were blunted. The Christians suffered (he speaks what he saw himself) with the greatest faith and patience. There was even the strongest appearance of joy and triumph among them, and to their last breath they employed themselves in psalms and thanksgiving. Philoromus, a person of great dignity at Alexandria, and a man of wealth and eloquence, is recorded as one, who died cheerfully for Christ at this time. Phileas also, bishop of the Thmutitæ, a man of eminence in his country, suffered in Thebais. In vain did relations, friends, magistrates, even the judge himself, exhort them to pity themselves, their wives and

* Euseb. B. IX. C. VIII.

children. — They loved Christ above all, and were beheaded*.

Undoubtedly these scenes demonstrate in the highest manner the strength of grace, and the reality of that divine influence which attended Christians. And when I see Mr. Gibbon, in his notes toward the conclusion of his first volume, quibbling and cavilling against the text of Eusebius, though any reader of Plutarch could have told him that the Greek word *ισορησάμεν*, signifies we saw, and the still plainer word *συνηρώμεν* leaves no room for doubt, methinks I see Stephen in the glory of his martyrdom, and the Jews gnashing upon him with their teeth.

Phileas, some time before his own martyrdom, being at Alexandria in prison, wrote an epistle to the Thmutitæ, his own church, concerning the sufferings of the Christians there. A fragment of which, Eusebius has preserved to us, which may not only illustrate the nature of the persecution, but also the spirit and views of the writer and other good men of that time. “The martyrs fixing sincerely the eye of their mind on the supreme God, and cheerfully embracing death for the sake of godliness, held immoveably their calling, knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ was made man for us, that he might cut down all sin, and might afford us the neces-

Epistle of
the martyr
Phileas.

* Phileas being asked, How he was persuaded that Jesus Christ was God? replied, He made the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead. Being asked, Is a crucified person God? he answered, He was crucified for our salvation. The Governor said, You are rich, and able to maintain almost all the province, I spare you, and advise you to sacrifice. It seems the liberality of Phileas was great toward the poor. The Governor added, Thy poor wife looks on thee. Phileas answered, Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all our spirits, he hath called me to the inheritance of his glory, and he may also call her to it. A little before his execution, My dear children, said he, ye that seek God, watch over your hearts. My dear children, stick fast to the precepts of Jesus Christ.—Acta Sincera. Fleury.

CHAP.

I.

sary preparatives for an entrance into eternal life.” (He then quotes the well-known passage concerning the proper Deity and humiliation of Christ, in the second chapter to the Philippians.) Coveting the best gifts, the martyrs, who carried Christ within, underwent all sorts of tortures once and again. And while the guards insulted them in word and deed, they were preserved serene and unbroken in spirit, because “perfect love casteth out fear.” But what eloquence can do justice to their fortitude? Free leave was given to any to injure them; some beat them with clubs, others with rods; some scourged them with thongs of leather, others with ropes. Some, having their hands behind them, were hung about a wooden engine, and every limb of their bodies was distended by certain machines. The torturers rent their whole bodies with iron nails, which were applied, not only to the sides, as in the case of murderers, but also to their bellies, their legs, and their cheeks; others were suspended by one hand to a portico, and underwent the most severe distention of all their joints; others were bound to pillars, face to face, their feet being raised above ground, that their bonds being distended by the weight of their bodies, might be the closer drawn together, and this they endured almost a whole day without intermission.—The Governor ordered them to be bound with the greatest severity, and when they breathed their last, to be dragged on the ground. No care, said he, ought to be taken of these Christians; let all treat them as unworthy of the name of men. Some, after they had been scourged, lay in the stocks, both their feet being stretched to the fourth hole; so that they were obliged to lie with their faces upward, unable to stand on account of the wounds caused by the stripes. Some expired under their tortures. Others having been recovered by methods taken to heal them, and being reduced to the alternative of sacrificing or dying, cheerfully

preferred the latter. For they knew what was written, "Whosoever sacrificeth to other gods, shall be destroyed," and "Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

CENT.
IV.

Such, says Eusebius, are the words of a martyr, a true lover of wisdom and of God, which, before the definitive sentence of his execution, he sent to the brethren of his own Church.

One city in Phrygia, being generally Christian, was besieged by armed men, and set on fire. The men with their wives and children were burnt to death, calling upon Christ, the God over all*. All the inhabitants, magistrates and people, nobles and plebians, professing Christianity, were ordered to sacrifice, and for refusing suffered in this manner†.

One Adautus, a Christian, of the highest dignity, who held at that time an office of great importance, was honoured also with the crown of martyrdom. Some were slain by axes, as in Arabia; some by breaking the legs, as in Cappadocia; some suspended by the feet, with the head downward, over a slow fire, were suffocated, as in Mesopotamia; some were mutilated, and cut in pieces, as at Alexandria. Some were burnt to death, in a very gradual manner, at Antioch. Some, to avoid falling into the hands of their enemies, committed suicide, by throwing themselves down from the tops of houses: lamentable instances of impatience! But the reader will remember, that the decline had been very great from Christian purity: that so many should suffer like Christians in so dull a time, can scarcely be accounted for, but on the idea of the

Martyrdom
of Adautus.

* Gibbon observes, that there was an important circumstance, which has been noticed by Ruffinus, the Latin translator of Eusebius; that the gates were opened to permit them to depart, if they pleased. The remark is worthy of his own malignity. Is it to be supposed, that this permission was unconditional? Eusebius tells us, that it was expected from them, that they should sacrifice.

† Euseb. B. VIII. C. XI.

Lord's reviving his work and ministering the Holy Spirit amidst their afflictions. I cannot commend the conduct of a lady of Antioch, or that of her two daughters, who, to avoid the licentious brutality of the soldiers, drowned themselves. Two other virgins in the same city of Antioch, persons of quality, and of great piety, died in a much more Christian manner, being thrown into the sea by the persecutors.

In Pontus, sharp reeds were thrust under the nails into the fingers of some ; the backs of others were scorched by melted lead ; some in their bowels and privy parts suffered inexpressible torments ; the judges exercising ingenious malice in the daily invention of new punishments.

Wearied at length with murder, and affecting to praise the clemency of the emperors, who were desirous to save life, they contented themselves with plucking out eyes, and cutting off one of the legs. The number of those who suffered in this way was inexpressible ; and they were afterwards condemned to work in the mines.

Lucian, a holy and exemplary presbyter of Antioch, had the honour to apologise for Christianity at Nicomedia, in the presence of the emperor, and afterwards to suffer. Tyrannio, bishop of Tyre, was thrown into the sea. Zenobius, a presbyter of Sidon, and an excellent physician, expired serene in tortures. Sylvanus, bishop of Emesa, with some others, was exposed to the wild beasts. Peleus and Nilus, Egyptian bishops, with others were burnt to death. Peter, bishop of Alexandria, suffered also together with Faustus, Dios, and Ammonius, his presbyters. Other Egyptian bishops are mentioned also by Eusebius, who leaves the celebration of the rest to those who saw their sufferings, contenting himself with a more particular account of those whom he knew, and of those facts of which he had ocular demonstration.

Lucian
suffered
Martyrdom.

A. D.

312.

As infidel writers have taken pains to depreciate the authenticity of these facts, it seemed proper to give the reader a just picture of them from Eusebius, and to submit to his determination, whether there be any internal evidences of falsehood in his narrative. In addition to what has been shown already from Lactantius, and ancient memorials, it may with justice be said, in favour of the credibility of the writer, whose character as a historian of veracity is before us, that he is large and circumstantial in scenes of which he was a spectator ; succinct and general, where he had no opportunity of knowing the circumstances. Of the martyrs of Palestine, his own country, he has given us a copious narrative, a specimen of which must now be delivered, containing those whose martyrdom fell within the period of Dioclesian's reign. The rest must be considered hereafter. Procopius was the first of these martyrs, who being brought before the tribunal, and ordered to sacrifice to the gods, declared that he knew only one God, to whom he ought to sacrifice in the manner which he has appointed. Being then ordered to make libations to the four emperors, he repeated a verse of Homer, which by no means pleased the persecutors, as implying a censure of the present government*. Upon this, he was beheaded immediately. Whether the empire was benefited by the appointment of four emperors instead of one, is a question of politics, which it certainly became not the martyr to enter upon, especially on that occasion. And it is the only instance of deviation into secular matters, which I remember to have seen in primitive Christians as yet. It might be only a sally of imprudent vivacity, but even so it was extremely ill-timed. Galerius, in whose dominions he said this, would probably hear of it ; and this fiercest of all the per-

* Οὐκ αγαθοι πολυκοιρανιη, εις κοιρανους εσθ
εις βασιλεις.

secutors, needed not the addition of such an incentive, to inflame his wrath against the Christians.

After him, in the same city, Cæsarea of Palestine, very many bishops of the neighbouring churches, suffered grievous torments: others through fear recanted at the first onset. The rest underwent a variety of punishments. Yet some pains were taken to save the reputation of the gods, and to preserve the lives of Christians at the same time.

One was dismissed, as if he had sacrificed, though he was dragged to the altar, and a sacrifice was put into his hand by violence. Another went away in silence, some persons, with a humane falsehood, testifying that he had complied. One was thrown out as dead, after he had been tortured, though yet alive. Another protesting against what was exacted of him, many beating him in the mouth, with a view to compel him to silence, was thrust out of the court. Alpheus and Zacchæus alone of all these bishops of Palestina, suffered death at this time. Tortured for twenty-four hours, after having undergone excessive severities before, they manfully confessed one only God, and one only Saviour Christ, and were at last beheaded.

Martyrdom
of Romanus.

On the same day at Antioch, Romanus, a deacon of the church of Cæsarea, was martyred. Happening to enter Antioch at the very time when the churches were demolished, he saw many men and women with their little ones, crowding to the temples and sacrifices, most probably Christian apostates*. The same spirit which moved Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees, on a like occasion, was felt by Romanus, but exerted in a manner more agreeable to the Christian dispensation. He cried aloud and rebuked their cowardice and perfidy. But being seized immediately, and condemned to the flames,

* So a discourse of Eusebins on the Resurrection teaches us. See B. on the Martyrs of Palestine, C. II. Valesius in the notes.

and fastened to the stake, while the executioners expected the definitive order from the emperor then present, (Galerius most probably) he asked cheerfully, Where is the fire for me? Cæsar, provoked at his boldness, ordered his tongue to be cut out. He put out his tongue with great readiness. After this punishment he was thrown into prison, and suffered there a considerable time. His feet were exposed to an unnatural distention, and in the end he was dismissed out of life by strangling. This happened during the first year of the persecution, while it raged only against the governors of the church.

In the second year, when the persecution grew hotter, Imperial letters were sent into Palestine, commanding all men, without exception, to sacrifice. At Gaza, Timotheus, after many sufferings, was consumed by a slow fire; Agapius and Thecla were condemned to the wild beasts. At this time, when many apostatized to save their lives, there wanted not also some instances of an excessive forwardness. Six persons at Cæsarea, with their hands bound, ran to Urbanus the Judge, and offered themselves for martyrdom. They suffered in conjunction with two others, whose spirit and circumstances in the manner of their departure out of life, were more conformable to the rules of the Gospel.

Power being now communicated to the governors of the different provinces to punish the Christians freely, each exercised it, as his particular temper dictated. Some, for fear of displeasing, did even more than they were ordered. Some felt the impulse of their own enmity against godliness; others indulged a natural savageness of disposition: there were who saw, that to shed blood profusely, was the high road to preferment. There were those, (and Lactantius* looks on them as of the worst sort), who determined to torment, and not to kill. Such

* B. V. C. 11.

persons studied those arts of torture, which might keep life still in being amidst the keenest sensations of pain. Eusebius tells us, that he himself heard some of this sort boasting, that their administration was not polluted with blood, and that he saw a Bithynian governor exulting, as if he had subdued a nation of Barbarians, because one person, after two years resistance, had yielded to the force of torments. Much pains were taken also with the tortured, to recover them, that they might be strengthened to endure new punishments. A considerable part of Roman jurisprudence was now employed on this subject. The constitutions of the law on this head had been published and commented on by the famous lawyer Ulpian, and were considered as serious objects of study by civilians.

At no time since the beginning of Christianity, was so systematical and so laboured an effort made to extinguish the Gospel of Christ. Satan had great wrath, as if he had foreseen that he should have but short time; and when we consider how poorly provided the Church was for this fiercest of all the invasions she had ever met with, we shall see cause to admire the grace of God, who yet furnished out a noble army of martyrs in a time of so great Evangelical declension; and in the end, more effectually than ever, baffled the designs of Satan.

In addition to other methods of persecution, the powers of genius and the arts of eloquence were introduced. Cyprian alone of the Latin writers was capable of pleasing the taste of the learned among the Pagans. A certain person of taste among them was heard by Lactantius, to call him Coprianus*, because he employed an elegant genius, adapted to better things, in the support of old wives' fables. In so contemptible a light did the Gospel appear to

* Lactan. B. V. 1, 2, the allusion is to κορμία, dung.

the learned of that day, even when clothed in the dress of the eloquent Cyprian ! but how much more contemptible in the hands of the generality of Christian teachers, who were destitute of the powers of argument and of language.

Encouraged by the favour of the emperors, and the apparently ruined state of Christendom, at the very time when the persecution raged in Bithynia, two writers appeared who insulted the Christians. One, whose name Lactantius does not give us, was a philosopher, and like many preachers of morality in all ages, a defender of virtue, and a practitioner of vice, a flatterer of the court, very rich, and very corrupt, one who condemned his own practice by his moral writings, and who dealt largely in the praises of the emperors, on account of their great piety in supporting the religion of the gods. Yet all men condemned his meanness in choosing that time particularly to write against Christians, nor did he obtain the favour at court which he expected.

The other writer, Hierocles, was doubtless a man of parts and talents. He was a virulent enemy of the Gospel, had great influence in promoting the persecution; and from being a judge in Nicomedia was promoted to the government of Alexandria. He attempted to compare the feigned miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus with those of Jesus Christ. This man wrote with an air of candour and humanity to the Christians, while his actions against them were fierce and bloody.

In France alone, and its neighbourhood, the people of God found some shelter. Yet was the mild Constantius, to save appearances with his superior Maximian, induced to persecute, not only by destroying the temples, as was mentioned, but also by dismissing those of his own household who would not renounce Christianity. The Christians of his family were tried by such means. But the event was contrary to their expectations. Constantius

retained the faithful, and dismissed the apostates, judging that those who were unfaithful to their God would also be disloyal to their prince.

At Cirta in Numidia, Paul, the bishop, ordered a sub-deacon to deliver up the treasures of the church to a Roman officer. The Holy Scriptures and the moveables of this society of Christians were surrendered by the perfidy or cowardice of those who ought to have protected them. But God reserved some, who were endowed with courage and zeal, at the hazard of their lives, to take care of the sacred writings, and baffle the intention of the persecutors, which doubtless was to destroy all records of Christianity among men. Felix of Tibiura, in Africa, being asked to deliver up the Scriptures, answered, I have them, but will not part with them. He was condemned to be beheaded. "I thank thee, O Lord," says this honest martyr, "that I have lived fifty-six years, have kept my virginity, have preserved the Gospel, and have preached faith and truth. O my Lord Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth, I bow my head to be sacrificed to thee, who livest to all eternity." I judge it not amiss to distinguish this man in the narrative. The preservation of civil liberty is valuable, and the names of men who have suffered for it with integrity are recorded with honour. But how much below the name of Felix of Tibiura should these be accounted! He is one of those heroes who have preserved to us the precious word of God itself. In Abitina, in Africa, forty-nine manfully perished through hunger and ill treatment. In Sicily*, Euplius a martyr being asked, "Why do you keep the Scriptures, forbidden by the emperors?" answered, "Because I am a Christian. Life eternal is in them; he that gives them up loses life eternal." Let his name be remembered with honour, together with that of Felix. He suffered also in the same cause. Various

* Acta Sincera. Fleury.

martyrs suffered in Italy. For Maximian was to the
all as much disposed to persecute as Dioclesian.

In the year 304 or 305, a civil change took place in
the empire, which paved the way for very important
changes in the Church, though the persecution con-
tinued still for some time. Dioclesian resigned the
empire, and Maximian followed his example, though
with no great cordiality. They were succeeded by
Galerius in the East, (who ruled in the room of
Dioclesian, and put Maximin his nephew, in his
own place,) and in the West by Constantius.

Resignati
of Diocle
sian.

A. D.
304 or 305

Maximin inherited the savageness and the pre-
judices of his uncle ; and in Palestine and in the
more eastern parts, over which Galerius had ruled,
he still continued the horrors of the persecution.
Let us now attend to the remaining part of Euse-
bius's account of the martyrs of Palestine, who suf-
fered under the authority of this tyrant at different
times.

Apphian, a young person under twenty, who had
received a very polite education at Berytus, and could
not bear to live with his father and relations at Pagæ
in Lycia, because of their aversion to the Gospel,
left all his secular emoluments and hopes for the love
of Christ, and came to Cæsarea ; where he was so
transported with zeal as to run up to Urbanus the
governor, then making a libation, to seize him by
the right hand, to stop his religious employment,
and exhort him to forsake idolatry, and turn to the
true God. The consequence was, what might be
expected in the natural course of things. He was
arrested, ordered to sacrifice ; and, after he had sus-
tained most dreadful tortures by fire and otherwise,
which Eusebius* describes with an exactness of de-
tail that needs not be repeated, he was thrown into
the sea. His imprudence was great, and his zeal
very irregular and extravagant ; but who will not
admire the sincerity of that love of Christ, which

Martyrdom
of Apphian

* C. IV.

carried this ardent youth through all hardships: who would not prefer his disposition, with all his faults, to the cowardice and love of the world, which in our times prevent such numbers from daring to show true regard for the divine Saviour?

This Apphian had a brother called *Ædesius*, who had advanced farther in the philosophical studies than himself, and who likewise embraced the faith of Christ. Prisons, bonds, and the drudgery of the mines of Palestine, he endured with great patience and fortitude; at length he came to Alexandria, and there saw the judge raging with frantic fury against Christians, treating the men with various abuses, and giving up chaste virgins, who had devoted themselves to a single life, to pimps, to be treated in the vilest manner. Fired at the sight, he lost all patience, rebuked the magistrate, and struck him. Upon which he was exposed to a variety of torture, and thrown into the sea. He seems to have possessed both the excellencies and the faults of his brother. It is proper to add *, that the inhuman magistrate was no other than the philosophical Hierocles, whose affected humanity and candour we have celebrated above. A remark or two may be proper in this place, before we proceed.

1. The persecution we are reviewing found the Church in the lowest state of Christian wisdom and piety. In addition to what I have said † on the ungenerous remarks of Mr. Gibbon, concerning the behaviour of *Ædesius*, it should be observed, that amidst the great dearth of instruction in which he had learned Christianity, it is not to be wondered at that he should know his duty so imperfectly. I compare the piety of him and of Apphian to that of Jephthah and of Sampson; sincere, but irregular and injudicious. They lived under similar circumstances, in times of great ignorance. The Spirit of God, when he creates a new heart, and a new spirit, and

* See Valesius' notes on Euseb.

† Milner's remarks on Gibbon.

furnishes a man with dispositions for obedience, supersedes not the use of pastoral instruction. Where this is much wanted, even divine love itself, though strong, is blind, comparatively speaking, and will mistake the rule of duty continually. It is in vain that I look out in all this period for judicious and discreet pastors, and for clear evangelical views. No Cyprian or Dionysius now appeared, to check, to regulate, to control the spirits of Christians, and to discipline them by Scripture rules. The persecution found vast numbers perfidious and cowardly; some chosen spirits, humble and faithful to death, but of these many, it is to be feared, poorly informed of their duty both to God and man, and mixing with the love of Christ the intemperance and precipitation of blind self-will. The best use to be made of this observation, after teaching us to be candid to the faults of these good men, is this, that those who enjoy the advantage of better instruction and of wise pastors, should thankfully improve their privileges, and not by the want of just subordination deprive themselves of the opportunity of exhibiting more regular and edifying examples of holiness. That knowledge was thus low among Christians, is evident from Eusebius, one of the most learned of those times, who extols a conduct in these brethren, which every Christian of common light and capacity now would condemn.

2. I see also the prevalence both of the monastic and of the philosophic spirit. Devotees were increasing in numbers among serious persons; and Origenism had made philosophy more and more reputable. Under this influence, the two brothers, whose story we have seen, imbibed too much of Platonism, knew too little of Christianity, and though sincere enough to become martyrs for Christ, attained not the praise of Christian simplicity. The doctrines of Christ had ceased to be explicitly unfolded; and it was in sufferings chiefly, endured

with patient faith and cheerful hope, that we can now see, that Christ had yet a church in the world. The bush was burning indeed in a fire the most dreadful, yet it was not consumed.

Martyrdom
of Agapius.

In the fourth year of the persecution happened the martyrdom of Agapius at Cæsarea. Maximin Cæsar was there exhibiting spectacles in honour of his birth-day. The ferociousness of pagans was doubtless much augmented by the usual barbarous sports ; and the native enmity of the mind against godliness met not with so many checks of humanity, in times of persecution, as it would in our days of civilization. But it should be remembered, that it was not philosophy, but the Gospel, which improved, in this as well as other respects, the morality of the Roman empire. Agapius, who had been thrice before brought on the stage, and had thrice been respited by the compassion of the judge, was now brought before the emperor, to fulfil, says Eusebius, that word of Christ, “ye shall be brought before kings for my name’s sake.” A slave who had murdered his master was produced at the same time, and condemned to the wild beasts. The emperor, with a view to distinguish his birth-day by an act of generosity, both pardoned and gave freedom to the murderer. The whole amphitheatre rang with acclamations in praise of his clemency. But it was perfectly to act in character for Maximin to punish the innocent and to spare the guilty. He asked Agapius if he would renounce Christianity, promising him liberty on that condition. The martyr expressed his cheerful readiness to undergo any punishment, not for any crime committed by him, but for piety toward the Lord of the universe. He was condemned to be torn by a bear, and still breathing, was carried back to prison ; where after he had lived a day, he was sunk in the sea with weights fastened to his feet. The exclamation of the Jews, in the history of our Saviour, “Not this man, but

DIOCLESIAN.

Barabbas," naturally occurs to Eusebius on this occasion.

In the fifth year of the persecution, a Tyrian virgin, Theodosia, not quite eighteen years old, was put to death for owning and countenancing some Christian prisoners. The judge, Urbanus, afterwards condemned them to the mines of Palestine. Silvanus a presbyter, afterwards a bishop, with some others, was doomed to the labour of the brass mines, the joints of their feet being first weakened by the application of hot iron.

Few persecutors exceeded Urbanus in malice and activity. He doomed three to fight with one another ; Auxentius, a venerable old saint, he condemned to the beasts. Some of them he condemned to the mines, after he had made them eunuchs. Others, after bitter torments, he threw into prison again.

If any be still inclined to regard the calculation of those, who represent the number of the martyrs as small, let him consider, that it was evidently very much the policy of this, and most probably of the former persecutions, to torment Christians without destroying them. The emperors did not wish to rob themselves of such a number of subjects, but to subdue them to their will. Yet in many instances the human frame must have sunk under these hardships ; and the multitude of Christian sufferers on this account, in addition to the evils of poverty and flight, must exceed all powers of calculation.

Urbanus tortured, among others, the famous Pamphilus, the friend of Eusebius ; but lived not to see his martyrdom. Being himself convicted of crimes, Urbanus was capitally punished in Cæsa-rea, the scene of his cruelties, and by the same Maximian, of whose imperial savageness he had been the minister.

In the sixth year of the persecution, of the great multitude of Christian sufferers in Thebais near a hundred were selected to be sent to Palestine, and

were adjudged by Firmilian, the successor of Urbanus, to be lamed in the left foot, and to lose the right eye, and in that state to be condemned to the mines. The three persons also, who had been condemned to fight with one another, for refusing to learn the new business of a gladiator imposed on them, were doomed by Maximin himself, with some others, to the same punishments as the persons transported from Thebais. Some persons were apprehended at Gaza for meeting together to hear the Scripture read, and were punished with the loss of a limb, and an eye, or in a still more cruel manner. Two women, after sustaining horrible torments, were put to death. The former being menaced with the loss of chastity, burst out into expressions of indignation against the tyrant Maximin, for employing such judges. The latter being dragged by force to an altar threw it down. What was said before of Ædesius and Apphian may be applied to these. But there were Christians of a higher class, better informed in their duty, and more possessed of the mind of Christ. A person, named Paul, being sentenced to lose his head, begged to be allowed a short space of time. His request being granted, he prayed with a loud voice for the whole Christian world, that God would forgive them, remove the present heavyscourge of their iniquities, and restore them to peace and liberty: he then prayed for the Jews, that they might come to God and find access to him through Christ. In the next place, he prayed that the same blessings might be vouchsafed to the Samaritans. The Gentiles, who lived in error and in ignorance of God, were the next objects of his charitable petitions, that they might be brought to know God and to serve him: nor did he omit to mention the crowd about him, the judge who had sentenced him, the emperors, and the executioner, and in the hearing of all he prayed that their sins might not be laid to their charge.

The whole company was moved, and tears were shed. The martyr composed himself to suffer, and offering his neck to the sword, he was beheaded: An admirable Christian hero! in whom divine love breathed in conjunction with resignation and serenity. The Lord's hand was not shortened: His grace appeared in him in a manner worthy of the Apostolic age. Soon after a hundred and thirty Egyptian chieftains, suffering the same mutilations which have been mentioned above, were sentenced by Maximin to the mines of Palestine and Cilicia.

After the persecution had paused some time, it was renewed with fresh violence by the Edicts of Maximin*. The temples were repaired; men were compelled to sacrifice every where; all things sold in the markets were polluted with libations; and persons were placed at the public baths to force men to idolatrous compliances. Three believers, Antoninus, Zebinus, and Germanus, threw themselves into the hands of Firmilian, and were capitally punished. Eusebius, in his usual manner, commends their over-forward zeal. With them a virgin called Ennathus was dragged by violence to the judge, whipped, and burned to death. Their bodies were left exposed to the beasts of prey, and particular care was taken to prevent their interment. Some time after, certain Egyptians, coming to minister to the confessors of their own country, who had been condemned to the mines in Cilicia, one of them was burned, two were beheaded, and several were associated with the confessors in their afflictions, mutilation, and the drudgery of the mines. Peter the monk, having in vain been solicited by the judge to save his life, gave it up cheerfully for the sake of Christ. With him suffered Asclepius, bishop of the Marcionites, being burned on the same funeral pile, "animated with zeal,"

Edicts of
Maximin.

* C. IX. de Martyr. Pal.

CHAP.

I

says my author, "but not according to knowledge*." This however might be more than Eusebius knew. The heretical form, in which he appeared, might be consistent with the pure love of Christ; in a history, which undertakes impartially to celebrate the people of God, it does not become us to be blinded by the idea of a rigorous and exclusive uniformity of denomination.

Pamphilus
beheaded.

Pamphilus the presbyter and friend of Eusebius is highly commended by him for his contempt of secular grandeur, to which he might have aspired; for his great liberality to the poor; for that which may seem more likely to cloud than to adorn his Christian excellencies, his philosophic life; above all, for his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in which his panegyrist thinks he excelled all men of that time; and for his benevolence to all who came to him. An excellent Christian he undoubtedly was, though a moderate degree of Evangelical knowledge in that age would easily be esteemed prodigious. Firmilian asking him when brought before him, what was his country, received for answer, "Jerusalem." Not understanding what he meant by this, he tortured him for an explanation. Pamphilus persisted that he had spoken truth. "Where is this country of yours?" "It belongs to those alone who worship the true God." The judge, at once incensed and perplexed, after various torments, ordered him to be beheaded. Twelve martyrs suffered with him. One of them, Porphyrius, a servant of Pamphilus, begging the favour of interment for the deceased, was ordered to be burned; and was heard for the last time, when the flame began to reach him, calling upon Jesus the Son of God as his helper. It is remarkable, that Firmilian also himself, after having trodden in the steps of Urbanus in shedding Christian

blood, like him also suffered capitally by the sentence of the emperor. c

Toward the end of the seventh year the persecution relaxing in some degree, the multitude of the confessors in the mines of Palestine enjoyed some liberty, and even erected some places of public worship. The president of the province coming among them, envied them the small cessation of their miseries, and wrote to the emperor in their prejudice. Afterwards the master of the mines coming thither, as if by an imperial rescript, divided the sufferers into classes. Some he ordered to dwell in Cyprus, others in Libanus; the rest he dispersed and harassed with various drudgeries in different parts of Palestine. Four he singled out for the examination of the military commander, who burnt them to death. Silvanus, a bishop of great piety, John, an Egyptian, and thirty-seven others, were the same day beheaded by the order of Maximin. Of John it is remarked, that though blind, he had been, like the rest, cauterized and debilitated in one leg by a hot iron. The strength of his memory was admired among the Christians: he could at pleasure repeat from the Old or New Testament many passages in Christian assemblies. But the fact proves something more than what Eusebius mentions, namely, that he had made the best use of his eyes while he was possessed of them.

And here we close the account from Eusebius, of the martyrs of Palestine. For eight years the East, with little intermission, groaned under the most heavy persecution. In the West, their sufferings abated after two years. The political changes of the empire account for the difference. But, both in the East and the West, Satan was permitted to exert his malice in the keenest manner during this last of the Pagan persecutions. And the Divine power and wisdom, in still preserving a real Church on earth, was never more conspicuously displayed, since

CHAP.

I.

the days of the Apostles. The time of an external triumph of the Church, under Constantine, was at hand. Those, who look at outward things alone, may be tempted to think how much more glorious would the Church have appeared at that time, without the previous desolations of Dioclesian's persecution. But when it is considered how much Christian doctrine had decayed, and how low holy practice had fallen, the necessity of so sharp a trial to purify the Church, and fit her at all for a state of prosperity, is evident. Otherwise, the difference between Christians and Pagans might probably have been little more than a name.

I know it is common for authors to represent the great declension of Christianity to have taken place only after its external establishment under Constantine. But the evidence of history has compelled me to dissent from this view of things. In fact we have seen, that for a whole generation previous to the persecution, few marks of superior piety appeared. Scarce a luminary of godliness existed; and it is not common in any age for a great work of the Spirit of God to be exhibited, but under the conduct of some remarkable Saints, Pastors, and Reformers. This whole period, as well as the whole scene of the persecution, is very barren of such characters. Not but that many precious children of God suffered in much patience and charity. But those who suffered with very much of a different spirit found no pastor to discountenance their self-will and false zeal; a sure sign that the true spirit of martyrdom was less pure than it had formerly been. Moreover, the prevalence of superstition on the one hand, and the decay of Evangelical knowledge on the other, are equally apparent. Christ crucified, justification purely by faith, and the effectual influences of the Holy Ghost, together with humbling views of man's total apostasy and corruption, these were ideas at least very faintly

impressed at that day on Christian minds. It is vain to expect Christian faith to abound without Christian doctrine. Moral, and philosophical, and monastical instructions, will not effect for men what is to be expected from Evangelical doctrine. And if the faith of Christ was so much declined, (and its decayed state ought to be dated from about the year 270), we need not wonder that such scenes as Eusebius hints at without any circumstantial details, took place in the Christian world *. He observes, that pastors of churches were condemned to take care of camels, and to feed the emperor's horses. Even he, who was far from seeing in a due light the cause of the declension of piety in their departure from the faith, was struck with the moral effects, and could not but revere the Divine justice, in giving unworthy ministers a punishment adapted to their crimes. He speaks also of the ambitious spirit of many, in aspiring to the offices of the Church, the ill-judged and unlawful ordinations, the quarrels among confessors themselves, and the contentions excited by young demagogues in the very relics of the persecuted Church, and the multiplied evils which their vices excited among Christians. How sadly must the Christian world have declined, which could thus conduct itself under the very rod of Divine vengeance? Yet let not the infidel or profane world triumph. It was not Christianity, but the departure from it, which brought on these evils; and even in this low state of the Church there was much more moral virtue than could be found any where else; and the charitable spirit of many in suffering, showed that God had yet a Church upon earth. The reader is however now prepared to conceive aright of the state of the Church, when Constantine took it under his protection, and to judge how far a national establishment was beneficial or prejudicial to it in future.

Decay of
pure Chris-
tianity.

A. D.
270.

* C. XII. Martyr. of Pal.

CHAP.

I.

Of this he could scarcely judge with any propriety, unless well informed of its previous spiritual condition. But before we enter upon this, some facts, more or less connected with the persecution, with the civil state of the Empire, so far as it may throw light on the history of the Church, and with the manner how the persecution closed, will call for our attention.

Martyrs in
Cilicia.

Of all the martyrologies of this persecution, none are more replete with horror than those which describe the sufferings of Taracus, Probus, and Andronicus, at Tarsus in Cilicia. But I suppose by this time, the reader has seen a sufficient specimen of scenes which admit of no entertainment, no colouring, no embellishment. One of the best lessons to be learnt from them is, that here human nature is discovered in the height of its enmity against God : and any man may see of what malignity he is capable, if left at large to his own dark designs. I looked over the acts of these martyrdoms, which are rather tedious* ; I suppose Mr. Gibbon also did the same, and his remark on what he had read, is this, that there was an asperity of behaviour in the martyrs, which might irritate the magistrates. But are words to be compared to deeds ? What if torments so terrible, so unprovoked, inflicted on innocent and worthy citizens, did extort a few passionate complaints and indignant speeches ? This was the case I see with Andronicus, and it is the only thing blameworthy which appears on the face of the narrative : Is this an apology, or even an extenuation for such barbarous persecutions ? Taracus firmly owned the truth. On being asked, whether he did not worship two gods, because he worshipped Christ, he confessed that "Christ was God, being the Son of the living God ; he is the hope of Christians ; he saves us by his sufferings." Probus, on being required to sacrifice to Jupiter,

* See Fleury, B. IX.

says, "What to him who married his sister, that adulterer, that unchaste person, as all the poets testify? In such testimonies as these, truth was delivered without violation of decorum. It was not so in the whole of these scenes. But enmity knows not what candour means; and lest such bigots to infidelity as Mr. Gibbon should misconstrue what I have said of the great decline of godliness in the Christians of these times, it ought in justice to be owned in their favour, that a persecution, which intended their total destruction, was carried on against a race of men, who were even then, with all their faults, the most loyal, peaceable, and worthy citizens in the whole Empire.

But Providence was raising up a Protector for the Church. The emperor Constantius lying at the point of death, desired his partner in the East, Galerius, to send him home his son Constantine. The eastern emperor, having delayed as long as possible, sent him at last, and the son arrived in Britain just in time to see his father alive, who was interred at Eboracum*. Constantine succeeding, gave the most perfect toleration to Christians, through the whole extent of his dominions. Providence was still with him in enlarging his kingdom, that, like another Cyrus, he might give peace and liberty to the Church. Rome and Italy were for some time under the power of Maxentius, the son of Dioclesian's colleague Maximian. This prince attempted the chastity of a Roman matron, who by suicide prevented his base designs. Had she been a Pagan, as Lucretia, her impatience under the hand of God was not to be wondered at; but she professed Christianity; yet her action is highly praised by Eusebius;—fresh proof of the taste of the times in religion. But Maxentius, though a tyrant of the basest character, never seems to have been, strictly speaking,

Constantine the Great succeeds Constantius.

A. D.
306.

CHAP.

I.

a persecutor of the Christians. Constantine, however, at length, coming from France into Italy, subverted his kingdom, and became sole master of the Western world. It was in his expedition against Maxentius that he is said to have seen the miracle of the Cross, the consideration of which will more properly excite our attention, when we come to consider the religious character and proceedings of this emperor. Maximian also, whose daughter Constantine had married, after various attempts to recover the power which by the influence of Dioclesian he had resigned, was put to death by his son-in-law for attempting his destruction.

Sufferings
of Galerius.

A. D.

310.

Galerius himself in the year 310 was smitten with an incurable disease: all his lower parts were corrupted: physicians and idols were applied to in vain: an intolerable stench spread itself over the palace of Sardis, where he resided: he was devoured by worms: and in a situation the most dreadful he continued a whole year. Softened at length by his sufferings, he published, in the year 311, an Edict, by which he took off the persecution from the Christians, allowed them to rebuild their places of worship, and entreated them to pray for his health. Thus did God himself subdue this haughty tyrant. Prisons were opened, and among others Donatus, the friend of Lactantius*, who had been confined six years, recovered his liberty.

Edict of
Galerius.

A. D.

311.

Galerius had exceeded all emperors in hostility to Christ; but who can fix the limit of human passions? His nephew Maximin, who reigned in a subordinate capacity in the East, was even his superior in the arts of persecution. Paganism was expiring, and it behoved the prince of darkness to find or qualify an agent, who should dispute every inch of ground with persevering assiduity.

Maximin, equally unmoved by the example of Constantine on the one hand, and the extorted clemency of Galerius on the other, suppressed the

* De Mort. persecut.

edict of the latter, and contented himself with giving verbal orders to stop the persecution. The prætorian prefect Sabinus, however, declared the will of the emperor in favour of toleration, which had all the effect his humanity wished. The prisoners were released, the confessors were freed from the mines, the highways were full of Christians, singing psalms and hymns to God, as they returned to their friends, and Christendom at length wore a cheerful aspect. Even Pagans were melted; and many who had joined in the attempt to extinguish the Christian name, began to be convinced, that a religion, which had sustained such repeated and such formidable attacks, was divine and invincible.

But this calm lasted not six whole months*. Galerius, a few days after his edict, expired, his body being altogether corrupted. Without entering into a minute description of his sufferings, which are particularized by Eusebius and Lactantius, it is perfectly right to observe, that he who delighted so long to make men feel the most exquisite misery, might say at last with Adoni-bezek†, “As I have done, so God hath requited me.” Maximin attempted to succeed him in all his eastern dominions; but was prevented by Licinius, whom Galerius had nominated Augustus, and who took possession of Asia Minor. But Syria and Egypt with their dependencies remained still under Maximin. Here he renewed the persecution with much malevolence and artifice. Under certain pretences, he forbade Christians to assemble in their churchyards, and then he privately procured petitions from various cities, which desired that the Christians might not be encouraged in their precincts. This was a refined species of policy, in which he was assisted by Theotecnus, the governor of Antioch. This man had hunted the Christians from their places of con-

* Euseb. B. IX. C. II. &c. † Judges, i. 7.

finement, and had caused the deaths of many. He now set up an oracle of Jupiter, and consecrated the idol at Antioch, with new ceremonies. Jupiter gave out, that the Christians ought to be banished from the city, and Maximin was informed, that it was his duty, both on motives of piety and of policy, to persecute the Christians. All the other magistrates of the cities, subject to Maximin, acted the same part as Theotecnus, and petitions were sent by the Pagan inhabitants begging the expulsion of Christians.

Maximin, furnished with plausible pretences for renewing the persecution, commenced it again. Through every city and village, idolatrous priests were appointed, and over them high-priests of a new institution, who applied themselves with great diligence to the support of declining paganism. They offered sacrifices with great assiduity. Persons of quality filled the highest offices of idolatry; and pains were taken to prevent Christians from building places of worship, or from following their religion in public or private; and the former method of compelling them to sacrifice was renewed. To render his new priests more respectable, Maximin clothed them with white mantles, such as were worn by the ministers of the palace. Incited by the example of the tyrant, all the Pagans in his dominions exerted themselves to contrive the ruin of Christians; and human ingenuity was put to the stretch, to invent calumnies in support of the kingdom of darkness.

When falsehood and slander are paid for by governments, they will not want employers.

Certain fictitious acts of Pilate and our Saviour, full of blasphemy, were, by Maximin's approbation, circulated through his dominions, with orders to facilitate the publication of them in all places, and to direct schoolmasters to deliver them to youth, that they might commit them to memory.

A certain officer at Damascus also engaged some infamous women to confess that they had been Christians, and privy to the lascivious practices which were committed on the Lord's day in their assemblies. These and other slanders were registered, copied, and sent to the emperor, as the authenticated confession of these women, and he circulated them through his dominions. The officer who invented this calumny, destroyed himself some time after by his own hand. But a specious pretence was now given for augmenting the persecution. Maximin, affecting still the praise of clemency, gave orders to the prefects not to take away the lives of Christians, but to punish them with loss of eyes, and various amputations. The other abominations of this tyrant, dreadful and uncommon as they were, come not within our province. His labours against Christianity only belong to our subject. Nor did he strictly abstain from shedding blood at this season, though one would think the experience of so many years should have taught him, as well as the other tyrants, that the "blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church."

There appears, however, a plan of polite refinement in this renewed persecution, beyond any thing which had yet been practised. Maximin did not now, as he had done formerly under Galerius, slay indiscriminately, or put to death numbers with exquisite torture. A few bishops and persons of Christian renown were deprived of life, the rest were harassed by every other kind of suffering short of death, and no arts were left unemployed to root Christianity out of the mind, and educate the next generation in a confirmed aversion to it. The decrees of cities against Christians, and besides these, the copies of imperial edicts engraved in brazen tables, were nailed up and seen in every town. Nothing like this had been done before. The persecution, in this its last stage, had arrived at the

Cruelties of
Maximin.

perfection of diabolical ingenuity. Children in their schools daily sounded Jesus and Pilate, and other things, invented to asperse the Gospel.

A rescript of the emperor's, nailed to a post at Tyre, manifests with what pleasure and joy he had received the petition of that city against the Christians. It venerates Jupiter and the rest of the gods, as the authors of all good ; appeals to the experience of the inhabitants how happily their affairs had proceeded since the worship of the antients had been restored, how they were now blest with good harvests, had no plagues, earthquakes and tempests, and enjoyed peace through the empire, and how opposite to all this the case had been, while Christendom prevailed. He desires that such as persisted still in their error should be banished from Tyre, according to the prayer of the petition. This rescript was a specimen of the rest, and it cannot be denied, that either Maximin, or some persons about him, were men of capacity, industry, and activity, though surely a worse cause was never found for the exertion of these talents.

Never were Christian minds so clouded and dispirited. Thus low did God suffer his Church to fall, to try its faith, and to purify it in the furnace. Art was more poisonous than rage, and the deceptions seemed calculated to impose (if it were possible) even on the elect. Very remarkable, however, was the Divine testimony to his Church ; at this time, man's extremity was the opportunity in which the truth and goodness of God appeared most conspicuous. There were doubtless many true Christians at that time wrestling with their God, to appear for his Church, and HE did so, in this manner. While the messengers were on the road with rescripts similar to that at Tyre, a drought commenced, famine unexpected oppressed the dominions of Maximin ; then followed a plague with inflamed ulcers. The sores spread over the body, but chiefly

affected the eyes and blinded many. And the Armenians, the allies and neighbours of the Eastern empire, entered into a war with Maximin; they were disposed to favour the Gospel, and Maximin, by extending his persecution to them, drew on their hostility. Thus were the boasts of Maximin confounded. The plague and famine raged in the most dreadful manner, and multitudes lay unburied. The Christians, whose piety and fear of God were stirred up on this occasion, were the only persons who employed themselves in doing good, every day busying themselves in taking care of the sick, and burying the dead, whereas numbers of Pagans were neglected by their own friends; they gathered together also multitudes of the famished poor, and distributed bread to all; thus imitating their heavenly Father, who sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Christians still appeared to be superior to all others; and the Church was known still to exist, by fruits peculiarly her own, to the praise of her God and Saviour.

Toward the end of the year 312, died the emperor Dioclesian, who had reigned prosperously for twenty years; in the latter part of which time he commenced the persecution, and abdicating the throne not long after, he lived seven years a private life: happy, had he done so on motives of piety. But the mischiefs which his authority introduced continued under tyrants more ferocious than himself; and he lived not only to see these mischiefs, without power to check them, had he been so disposed, but also, what more probably afflicted his mind, to find his daughter Valeria, the widow of Galerius, and her mother, his own wife Prisca, treated with great injustice by his successors, and to solicit their release in vain. Worn out with grief and vexation, he ended his days at length, a monument of the instability of all human greatness. He lived not to see the catastrophe of his wife and daughter, who, after a long course of sufferings, were put to death by Licinius.

Death of
Dioclesian.

A. D.
312.

It is foreign to the design of this history to particularize their story, which, after all, is very mysterious. Why they should be so much persecuted, first by Maximin and then by Licinius, we know not. A conjecture may be made, but it must be considered only as a conjecture. The two princesses had doubtless favoured the Gospel in the days of their grandeur, and had defiled themselves with sacrifices to appease Dioclesian. Might they not afterwards suffer for the sake of the Gospel itself, though their persecutors might not chuse to represent them as suffering on account of Christianity? If so, the princesses sustained the cross with more fidelity than formerly. Maximin was surely capable of all this inhumanity, and that Licinius also was so, though for some time a friend of Christians, will appear hereafter.

A. D.

313.

In the year 313, there was a war between Licinius and Maximin, who contended each for the complete sovereignty of the East. Before the decisive battle, Maximin vowed to Jupiter, that if he obtained the victory, he would abolish the Christian name. Licinius, in a dream*, was directed to supplicate, with all his army, the supreme God, in a solemn manner. He gave directions to his soldiers to do so, and they prayed in the field of battle, using the very words which he had received in his dream. In all this the reader will see nothing suspicious, nothing but what is in its own nature very credible, when he considers that the contest between Jehovah and Jupiter was now at its height, and drawing to a crisis. Victory decided in favour of Licinius. Maximin, in consequence of this†, published a cautious decree, in which he forbade the molestation of Christians, but did not allow them the liberty of public worship. Warned by former experience of his enmity, the Christians in his dominions dared not to assemble themselves together.

* Last. de M. P.

† Euseb. B. X. C. IX.

Whilst the rest of the Christian world, under the auspices of Constantine and Licinius, who published a complete toleration of Christianity, together with that of all other religions, enjoyed peace and tranquillity.

End of the
Xth Perse-
cution.

It was the will of God to lay his hand still more heavily on the tyrant. Struck with rage at his disappointments, in the sad reverse of his affairs he slew many priests and prophets of his gods, by whose enchantments he had been seduced with false hopes of universal empire in the East; and finding most probably that he gained no friends among Christians by his late edict, he published another in their favour as full and complete as that of Constantine and Licinius. So amazingly were affairs now changed, that contending emperors courted the favour of the poor persecuted Christians. After this he was struck with a sudden plague over his whole body, pined away with hunger, fell down from his bed, his flesh being so wasted away by a secret fire, that it consumed and dropped off from his bones; his eyes started out of their sockets; and in his distress he began to see God passing judgment on him*. Frantic in his agonies, he cried out, "It was not I, but others who did it." At length, by the increasing force of torment, he owned his guilt, and every now and then implored Christ, that he would compassionate his misery. He confessed himself vanquished, and gave up the ghost†.

Death of
Maximin.

* Lactantius tells us, that the immediate cause of his death was poison, which he drank in his fury. But I think Eusebius's account more probable, because Lactantius allows that he lived four days under torture.

† It is remarkable, that all the associates of Maximin in his crimes, partook also of his punishments. Among these Culcian, the bloody governor of Thebais, and Theotecnus, are distinguished. His enchanters were, by torments under the authority of Licinius, compelled to lay open the frauds of their employers, and he and they, with all the children and relations of the tyrant, were destroyed.

Thus closed the most memorable of all the attacks of Satan on the Christian Church. Since that time he has never been able to persecute Christians, as such, within the limits of Roman civilization in Europe. I thought the account of the most violent attempt to eradicate the Gospel, ever known, deserved to be distinctly related. If some things happened more approaching to the nature of miracles, than ordinary history knows, the greatness of the contest shows at once the propriety of such signal divine interpositions, and renders them more credible. The present age affects a scepticism more daring than any preceding one; but in every age before this, all pious and considerate persons have agreed that the arm of God was lifted up in a wonderful manner, at once to chastise and to purify his Church, and also to demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion to the proudest and the fiercest of his enemies, till they were obliged to confess that the Gospel was divine, and must stand in the earth invincible; that the most High ruleth, and that he will have a Church in the world, which will glorify him, in spite of earth and hell united, and that this Church contains in it all that deserves the name of true wisdom and true virtue.

C H A P. II.

A VIEW OF THE STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, ON ITS ESTABLISHMENT UNDER CONSTANTINE.

THIS emperor from early life had some predilection in favour of Christianity. His father Constantius, like Agrippa, had been almost persuaded to be a Christian, and probably the same fear of man and the same love of the world operated as a check

pon both. This, however*, we are informed concerning him, that he condemned the polytheism of the times, and worshipped one God, the maker of all things, that he had multitudes of Christians in his palace, and among these, ministers of the Gospel, who openly prayed for the emperor. The knowledge of these things, joined to the remarkable contrast between the moral character of his father, and that of the other emperors, must have made some impression in favour of the Christian religion on the intelligent spirit of Constantine, though more pungent views of internal depravity and guilt be needful to induce the mind to enter fully into the spirit of the Gospel. But even a worldly mind may feel the need of divine assistance, when dubious under the prospect of important secular events: And Constantine marching from France into Italy against Maxentius, on an expedition, which was likely either to exalt or to ruin him, was oppressed with anxiety. Some god he thought needful to protect him. The God of the Christians he was most inclined to respect; but he wanted some satisfactory proof of his real existence and power; and he neither understood the means of acquiring this, nor could he be content with the atheistic indifference, in which so many generals and heroes since his time have acquiesced. He prayed, he implored with much vehemence and importunity; and God left him not unanswered. While he was marching with his forces, in the afternoon, the trophy of the Cross appeared very luminous in the heavens, higher than the sun, with this inscription, "Conquer by this †." He and his soldiers were astonished at the sight. But he continued pondering on the event till night. And Christ appeared to him when asleep, with the same sign of the cross, and directed him to make use of the symbol as his military ensign. Constan-

* Euseb. Life of Constantine, XVII.

† TERTULLIAN.

tine obeyed, and the cross was henceforward displayed in his armies*.

Constantine, who hitherto was totally unacquainted with Christian doctrine, asked the pastors, who this God was, or what was the meaning of the sign. They told him, that it was God, the only-begotten Son of the only true God†, that the sign was the trophy of the victory, which he when on earth had gained over death. At the same time they explained to him the causes of his coming, and the doctrine of his incarnation. From that time Constantine firmly believed the truth of Christianity. He would have acted irrationally, if he had not; and it were an inexcusable want of candour to ascribe to motives merely political a course of conduct in favour of Christianity, in which he persevered to his death; and which he began at a time when the triumph of the Christian cause and the success of his arms, as connected with it, were extremely dubious. He began after this to read the Scriptures, and zealously

* I give the narrative of Eusebius as concisely as possible. It is proper to add, that he tells us he had the story of the miraculous appearance in the heavens from the emperor himself a long time after, and that confirmed by an oath. He, who is determined not to believe Christianity to be divine, will doubtless disbelieve this miracle, from the same spirit which has induced him to harden his heart against much more striking evidence. With such a one I would not converse on the subject. But to those who admit the divine origin of Christianity, if any such doubt the truth of the miracle, I would say, that it seems to me more reasonable to admit a divine interposition in a case like this, especially considering the important consequences, than to deny the veracity of Eusebius or of Constantine. On the former view God acts like himself, condescending to hear prayer, leading the mind by temporal kindness to look to him for spiritual blessings, and confirming the truth of his own religion; on the latter, two men not of the very best, but surely by no means of the worst character, are unreasonably suspected of deliberate perjury or falsehood.

† I suspect Eusebius expresses here his own sense of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, which will be considered hereafter: his words are, *τον μὲν εἶναι θεόν; θεὸν τὴν ἐνός καὶ μόνου μορφῆς παῖδα.*

patronized the pastors of the Church all his days. Whether he really loved the Gospel, and felt its influence on his own heart, is a doubtful question ; but that he believed it to be divinely true, is certain, if a consistent and long course of actions be admitted as evidence.

It belongs to civil history to describe the civil and military transactions of this warlike and magnanimous prince. He was* no sooner made master of Rome by the destruction of Maxentius, than he honoured the cross by putting a spear of that form into the hand of the statute erected for him at Rome. He now built churches, and showed great beneficence to the poor. He encouraged the meeting of bishops in synods, he honoured them with his presence, and employed himself in continually aggrandizing the Church. In the mean time his associate in the East, Licinius, began to persecute it.

Notwithstanding the proofs which this man had had of the divine interposition in favour of the Gospel, during his contest with Maximin, the force of old prejudices imbibed under Galerius operated at length, in conjunction with the native depravity of the human heart, to induce him to renew the persecution. He prohibited Christian synods in his dominions, expelled believers from his court, and forbade the women to attend the public assemblies of men, and ordered them to furnish themselves with separate teachers of their own sex. He dismissed from his armies those who refused to sacrifice, and forbade any supplies to be afforded them in their necessities. He proceeded still further. He murdered bishops, and destroyed churches. At Amasia, in Pontus, his cruelty was particularly distinguished. He used enchantments, and once more

* His victory over the tyrant was providentially striking ; and the credulity of Maxentius, and the failure of the heathen oracles, which encouraged him to proceed against Constantine, are no less remarkable. But this is civil history.

Satan made a feeble attempt to recover by his means the ground he had lost. It was not probable that Licinius should take these steps without quarrelling with Constantine, and a war soon commenced between the two princes. Licinius put the truth or falsehood of the Gospel on the event of war. It was an unwarranted appeal, but God answered him in his own way. He lost in the issue both his empire and his life. It is remarkable, that one of Constantine's soldiers, who parted with the banner, of the cross in battle to save his life, lost it, while he, who in his room supported and upheld the banner, was preserved. It were to be wished, that there had been as much zeal at this time to support the doctrines and realize the power of the cross, as there was to honour its formalities. But this was far from being the case.

For neither in Constantine, nor in his favourite bishops, nor in the general appearance of the church, can we see much of the spirit of godliness. Pompous apparatus, augmented superstitions and unmeaning forms of piety, much show and little substance appears. This is the impression, which the account given by Eusebius has left on my mind. As the matter of my history is very scanty here, I shall endeavour to compress it into a small compass, chiefly with a view to catch the face of Christianity at this period, and to pave the way for a more complete understanding of the great controversy, which must soon arrest our attention.

If we look at the external appearance of Christianity, nothing can be more splendid. An emperor, full of zeal for the propagation of the only divine religion, by edicts restores to the Church every thing of which it had been deprived, indemnifies those who have suffered, honours the pastors exceedingly, recommends to governors of provinces to promote the Gospel; and though he will neither oblige them nor any others to profess it, yet he forbids them to

ake use of the sacrifices commonly made by pre-
fects; he erects churches exceedingly sumptuous and
ornamental, with distinctions of the parts corre-
sponding in some measure to those in Solomon's
Temple, discovers with much zeal the sepulchre of
Christ at Jerusalem, real or pretended, and honours
it with a most expensive sacred edifice. His mother
Helena fills the whole Roman world with her muni-
ficent acts in support of religion; and after erecting
churches, and travelling from place to place to evi-
dence her zeal, dies before her son, aged eighty years.
Nor is the Christian cause neglected even out of the
bounds of the Roman empire. Constantine zealously
pleads, in a letter to Sapor king of Persia, for the
Christians of his dominions: he destroys idol tem-
ples, prohibits impious pagan rites, puts an end to
the savage fights of gladiators, stands up with re-
spectful silence to hear the sermon of Eusebius,
bishop of Cæsarea, the historian; furnishes him with
the volumes of the Scriptures for the use of the
churches, orders the observation of the festivals of
martyrs, has prayers and reading of the Scripture at
his court, dedicates churches with great solemnity,
makes Christian orations himself, one of which of a
considerable length is preserved by the historian his
favourite bishop, directs the sacred observation of
the Lord's day, to which he adds that of Friday also,
the day of Christ's crucifixion, and teaches the sol-
diers of his army to pray by a short form made for
their use.

It may seem invidious to throw any shade on this
picture; but though the abolition of lewd, impious,
and inhuman customs must have been of great
advantage to society, and though the benefits of
Christianity, compared with paganism, to the world,
appear very strong by these means; yet all this, if
sound principle be wanting, is but form and shadow.
As it was difficult to clear Origen of depreciating
the divinity of Christ, so it is still more difficult to

exculpate Eusebius, with whom he was a favourite author. Not to anticipate what will more properly pass under examination hereafter, there seems to have been both in Eusebius and some of his friends, and probably in the emperor himself, a disposition, of which perhaps they were not conscious, to lessen the honours of the Son of God. In his oration at the dedication of the church at Tyre, he distinguishes between the first and the second cause, and seems very careful to give the supreme title exclusively to the Father. His sermons breathe little of Christianity, so far as I have seen them. He largely assigns various causes for the coming of Christ into the world, and though among these he gives some place to the work of redemption and sacrifice for sin, he speaks of them slightly, and as it were by the bye. I have observed also, that, in one place of his writings, he speaks in a very subordinate manner of the Holy Ghost, though it must be confessed, he is so rhetorical, and indistinct in his theological discourses, that it is difficult to extract any determinate propositions from his writings.

It was to be expected that great defectiveness of doctrine would not fail to influence practice. External piety flourished, monastic societies in particular places were also growing; but faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, appear very rare; yet, among the poor and obscure Christians I hope there was far more godliness than could be seen at courts, and among bishops and persons of eminence. The doctrine of real conversion was very much lost, or external baptism was placed in its stead; and the true doctrine of justification by faith, and the true practical use of a crucified Saviour for troubled consciences, were scarcely to be seen at this time. There was much outward religion, but this could not make men saints in heart and life. The worst part of the character of Constantine is, that as he grew older, he grew more culpable, oppressive in his own

family, oppressive to the government, oppressive by eastern superfluous magnificence; and the facts to be displayed will show, how little true humility and charity were now known in the Christian world, while superstition and self-righteousness were making vigorous shoots, and the real Gospel of Christ was hidden from men who professed it.

The schism of the Donatists, as its history throws some light on the manners of Christians, will deserve a few words in this place. During the cessation of the persecution in the West, while it raged still in the East, on the death of Mensurius bishop of Carthage, a council of neighbouring bishops was called for the appointment of his successor. The council was thinner than had been usual, through the management of Botrus and Celesius, two persons who aspired to the office, whose ambition was however disappointed, the election falling on Cæcilian the deacon. All that was essential in the appointment of a bishop was observed in this transaction; for Cæcilian had confessedly the suffrage of the whole church. The two disappointed persons protested against the election, and were joined by Lucilla, a rich lady, who for a long time before had been too haughty to submit to discipline. One Donatus of Casæ nigræ, who had been a schismatic before this time, offered himself as the chief of the faction. A number of bishops co-operated with him, piqued that they had not been called to the ordination of Cæcilian. Seventy bishops, a number of whom had been traditors*, met thus together at Carthage, to depose Cæcilian.

The reader will conceive in a strong light, how corrupt the pastors of the African church must have been at that time, when such a number met to impose a bishop on the church of Carthage against the

* A name of infamy given to those who to save their lives in the persecution, had delivered the Scriptures or goods of the church to the persecuting powers.

general sense of the Christians at that place, and were at the same time unable to object any one crime, or support the least material accusation against the pastor, who had the hearts of the people. Yet they persevered, and ordained one Majorinus, a servant of the factious lady, who, to support the ordination, gave large sums of money, which the bishops divided among themselves.

Such is the origin of the famous Donatist schism, the second class of dissenters who have appeared in the records of the Church ; but, as in their origin, so in their manners and spirit all along, they seem unworthy to be compared with the first class, the Novatian, which still existed. With these a degree of real spirituality existed ; whereas with the Donatist, there does not appear to have been any *.

It would be tedious to enter into a detail of Constantine's proceedings in regard to this sect. Undoubtedly he had a great respect for whatever he conceived to be Christian. With much candour and patience he examined and re-examined the case of the Donatists ; and the issue was constantly to their disgrace. They stirred up magistrates to deprive the Christian pastors of the benefit of the imperial laws, by which they were exempted from public offices, and endeavoured to deprive them of their churches, till the emperor was at last provoked to confiscate the places of their assemblies. Silvanus, one of the Donatist bishops, being convicted of having delivered up the vessels of the church, and of being simoniacally ordained a bishop, and of having deprived the Christians of their church, was sent into banishment, with some others of the faction. Yet such was the kindness of Constantine toward the Christian name, that he recalled them from their banishment, and granted religious toleration to the party, of which lenity they continued to make an unworthy use.

* Fleury, B. IX.

CONSTANTINE.

How corrupt is human nature ! The Church has outward peace, and even prosperity. Yet feuds, contentions, and the most unworthy spirit of avarice and ambition, appear very prevalent. So ungrateful were men for that admirable administration of Providence, which as we have seen now took place in their favour. Another scourge seemed quickly necessary, a scourge generated from their own vices indeed, though evidently of divine appointment for the chastisement of the Church. Satan saw his time; pure doctrinal truth was now too commonly mere speculation. Men were ripe for a perversion of doctrine. Lower or ambiguous views of Christ were secretly rising amidst the Platonic studies of learned men. Origen gave the first handle ; Eusebius the historian with cautious prudence was fomenting the evil. And at length a bold and open assault was made against the Deity of the Son of God, and persecution was stirred up against Christians by those who bore the Christian name. The people of God were exercised, refined, and improved ; while the Christian world at large was torn in pieces with violence, intrigue, and scandalous animosities, to the grief of all who loved the Son of God, and walked in his ways in godly simplicity.

CEN
IV

CHAP. III.

THE PROGRESS OF THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY,
TILL THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE*.

PETER, bishop of Alexandria, had suffered martyrdom under the Dioclesian persecution. Numbers had recanted at that time to save their lives, and among the rest Meletius, an Egyptian bishop. This man was of a schismatical and enterprising spirit, and having been deposed by Peter before his

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* Socrates, 1. 6.

martyrdom, he separated himself, continued bishop on his own plan, ordained others, and gave rise to the third species of Dissenters: THAT is the proper name of the Meletian party; for they are not charged with corruption in their doctrine. Nor was this the only person who disturbed the Church, and exercised the patience of Peter. Arius of Alexandria, in his beginnings, was a promising character, but on the appearance of the Meletian party, he espoused their cause. Some time after, he left it, and reconciled himself to Peter, and was by him ordained deacon: but condemning the bishop's severity in rejecting the Meletian baptism, and exhibiting a restless and factious spirit, he was again expelled from the Church. After which Peter was called to his rest by martyrdom. He was, like Cyprian, too severe in rejecting the baptism of schismatics and heretics, but his zeal was doubtless from a desire of preserving the uniformity of Christian faith, and he did not live to see still stronger proofs of that turbulent and contentious spirit in his deacon, which has rendered the name of Arius so famous in history.

Character
of Arius.

Achillas had succeeded to the bishopric: and from him Arius, by submissions, again obtained favour. Understanding and capacity will command respect, and these were undoubtedly possessed by Arius in a great degree. He was by nature formed to deceive. In his behaviour and manner of life he was severe and grave; in his person tall and venerable; and in his dress almost monastic. He was agreeable and captivating in conversation, and well skilled in logic and all the improvements of the human mind, then fashionable in the world*.

Such was the famous Arius, who gave name to one of the most powerful heresies which ever afflicted the Church of Christ, and of whom Cicero's words, with little variation, in his masterly character

* Sozomen, B. 15,

of Catiline*, might be delivered; "had he not possessed some apparent virtues, he would not have been able to form so great a design, nor to have proved so formidable an adversary." He, who does much mischief in deceiving souls, must at least have a fair appearance of morals. Paul of Samosata wanted this, and he glittered only as the insect of a day.

Achillas advanced Arius to the office of presbyter, which in that church was more important than in others, because each presbyter had a distinct congregation of his own, and was not sent up and down to different churches, at the discretion of the bishop, as the general practice had been in the primitive Church. This practice, however, in time gave way to the Alexandrian custom. Alexander, the successor of Achillas, under Constantine, treated Arius with respect, and appeared very backward to censure him for his dangerous speculations in religion. The pride of reasoning seduced the presbyter to assert†, that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that he was capable of virtue or of vice, and that he was a creature, and mutable as creatures are. Whilst he was insinuating these things, the easiness of Alexander in tolerating such notions was found fault with in the church. Necessity roused him at length, however unwilling to contend, and in disputing before Arius and the rest of his clergy‡, he affirmed that there was an union in the Trinity. Arius thinking that the bishop introduced Sabellianism, eagerly maintained the extreme which is opposite to that heresy, and said, "if the Father begat the Son, the begotten had a beginning of existence; hence it was evident there was a time when he was not."

I have given the narration from the two histo-

* See his Oration pro Cælio.—Neque unquam ex illo tam sceleratus impetus extitisset, nisi tot vitiorum tanta immanitas quibusdam facilitatis & patientiæ radicibus niteretur.

† Sozomen, B. I. c. 15.

‡ Socrates, 1. 5.

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rians rather with a view to connect and reconcile them, than from a conviction that this dispute arose from Alexander's zeal to withstand the growth of Arianism. For it might have originated from his orthodox zeal in general, before Arius had yet distinctly broached his notions. Be that as it may, Arius evidently split on the common rock of all heresies, a desire of explaining by our reason the modes of things which we are required to believe on divine testimony alone. Many of the clergy joined the disputatious presbyter, and it was no longer in Alexander's power to prevent a solemn cognizance of the cause. He was himself cautious and slow in his proceedings*; while many persons of a grave cast, and able and eloquent, like Arius, espoused and fostered the infant heresy. Arius preached diligently at his church, diffused his opinions in all companies, and gained over many of the common people; a number of women who had professed virginity espoused his cause; and Alexander saw the ancient doctrine of the Church undermined continually †. Lenient measures and argumentative methods having been tried in vain, he summoned a synod of bishops, who met at Alexandria, condemned Arius's doctrine, and expelled him from the Church, with nine of his adherents.

Arianism
What?

What Arius really held may be distinctly stated from the concurrent testimony of friends and enemies. Already some secret and ambiguous attempts had been made to lessen the idea of the divinity of the Son of God. While his eternity was admitted by Eusebius the historian, he yet was not willing to own him co-equal with the Father. Arius went greater lengths: he said, That the Son proceeded out of a state of non-existence; that he was not before he was made; that he, who is without beginning, has set his Son as the beginning of things

* Sozomen, I. 5.

† Theod. B. I. c. 2. See Cave's Life of Athanasius.

that are made, and that God made one, whom he called Word, Son, and Wisdom, by whom he did create us. From these, and such like expressions, it is evident what Arianism properly is: for the epistle of Arius himself*, preserved by Theodoret, represents his views in the same manner as his adversaries have done, and proves that no injustice was done to him in this respect†.

* Theod. B. I. c. 5.

† I shall give the reader the epistle at length, that he may judge for himself, though some parts of it are of no consequence with respect to the controversy. I believe it is the only fragment we have of his writings, and it is therefore the most authentic of all records, to decide the question, what Arianism is.

The Epistle of Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia.

“To my most desirable lord, the faithful man of God, the orthodox Eusebius, Arius persecuted by father Alexander unjustly, for the sake of truth, which conquers all things, of which you are the defender; joy in the Lord! My father Ammonius coming to Nicomedia, it appeared to me my duty to address you by him, and at the same time to inform your rooted charity and kind disposition, which you have towards the brethren, for the sake of God and his Christ, that the bishop harasses and persecutes us greatly, and moves every machine against us, so as even to expel us from the city as Atheists, because we agree not with him who publicly says, “always God, always the Son: at the same time the Father, at the same time the Son: the Son co-exists with God without being begotten: he is always begotten, yet unbegotten: God does not precede the Son in thought, not for a moment: always God, always the Son: the Son exists from God himself.” And when Eusebius your Brother in Cæsarea, and Theodotus, and Paulinus, and Athanasius*, and Gregory, and Aetius, and all the bishops in the East, said, that God who had no beginning, existed before the Son, they were condemned, except only Philogonius, and Ellanicus, and Marcarius, heretical unlearned men, some of whom call the Son an eructation, others a projection, others begotten together with him. We cannot bear to hear these impieties, though the heretics should threaten us with ten thousand deaths. But what we say and think, we have both taught and do teach; That the Son is not unbegotten, nor a part of the unbegotten, by any means, nor of any subject matter; but that by will and counsel he existed before the times and the ages, full God, only begotten, not mixed with any thing heterogeneous, and before he was begotten, or created, or defined, or founded, HE WAS NOT; for he

* Not the famous Athanasius.

It is an easy thing to say here, that silence and charity would have been the best means of preserving peace on all sides : but then this mode of speaking supposes that the controversy was frivolous. No real Christian can think it unimportant, whether his Saviour be believed to be the Creator or a creature. The soul is of too great consequence for men to hazard its salvation on they know not what. And it then appeared to all humble and charitable Christians, that to persist in blaspheming God, was at least as practical an evil as to persist in drunkenness and theft. All these found themselves obliged to join with Alexander against Arius. Silence was a vice in this case ; though it can never be enough lamented how little care was taken of humility and charity, of both which the exercise is perfectly consistent with the sincere zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity ; but true religion itself was low ; the face of the Church was “sullied and dishonoured, yet still divine.” And amidst the numbers who, from fashion, prejudice, or worse motives, joined with the Alexandrian bishop, we must look for those, though they are hard to be found, who feared God, and whose history alone is the subject before us. The principles of Arius exclude him and his followers, and by the fullest light of antiquity their actions also exclude them from being numbered among the sound, faithful, intelligent followers of Jesus.

The Christian world now became the scene of animosity and contention. The orthodox and the heretical did each their utmost to support their several pretensions : practical religion was too much forgotten by both sides ; and the former, from the want, or at least from the very low state of experimental was not unbegotten. We are persecuted because we say **THE SON HATH A BEGINNING** ; but **GOD** is without beginning. For this we are persecuted, and because we say, that the Son is from **NON-EXISTENCE**, and thus we said, because he is not part of God, nor of any subject matter : for this we are persecuted ; the rest you know. I pray that you may be strong in the Lord,—remembering our afflictions.”

religion, were deprived of the very best method of supporting the truth, by showing its necessary connexion with the foundation of true piety and virtue. The* Gentiles beheld the contest and triumphed; and on their theatres they ridiculed the contentions of Christians, to which their long and grievous provocations of their God had justly exposed them. Alexander repeatedly, in letters and appeals, maintained his cause, and so far as speculative argumentation can do it, he proved his point from the Scriptures; while Arius strengthened himself by forming alliances with various bishops, and particularly with Eusebius of Nicomedia†, who supported Arianism with all his might. He had been translated from Berytus in Syria, and by living in the metropolis, (for there Constantine resided much) he had an opportunity of ingratiating himself with the emperor. Near an hundred bishops in a second synod at Alexandria condemned Arius, who was now obliged to quit that place, and try to gain supporters in other parts of the empire.

In the year 324, Constantine being at Nicomedia, and intending to make a farther progress into the East, was prevented by the news of these contentions. So important were Christian affairs now grown, at a time when it is with difficulty we can find any eminent spirit of genuine piety. The emperor sincerely strove to make up the breach; for his regard for Christianity in general was doubtless sincere; but it is not in ecclesiastical proceedings that we can discover any trace of that penetration and discernment for which in civil story he is so justly renowned. He wrote both to Alexander and Arius, blamed both, expressed his desire for their agreement, and explained nothing. He sent the letter by Hosius bishop of Corduba, one whose

* I use the language of the times, in calling the Pagan world Gentiles.

† He must not be confounded with Eusebius of Cæsarea, the historian.

faith and piety had been distinguished in the late persecutions. Hosius endeavoured to make up the breach ; but it was impossible. The two parties were formed, and were determined ; worldly motives were too predominant in both to admit of an easy compromise ; and it was not in the power of those who loved both truth and peace, to sacrifice the former to the latter, consistently with a good conscience, however sincerely desirous they must have been of promoting both. For the object of contention was not a trifle, but a fundamental in religion.

Constantine now took the resolution of summoning the aid of the whole Christian Church ; and the Nicene Council calls for our attention.

The bishops, collected from all parts of the Christian world, met at Nice in Bithynia : and their number, according to the account of Athanasius who was present, amounted to three hundred and eighteen. Of these, if we may believe Philostorgius the Arian historian, twenty-two espoused the cause of Arius ; others make the minority still less. Be that as it may, since many presbyters were there besides the bishops, it is not probable that the whole number of persons assembled in the council was less than six hundred.

Nicene
council.
A. D.
325.

They met in the year 325, being transported to Nice in public conveyances at the emperor's expence, and maintained at his cost, while they resided there.

Before the immediate business of the synod was entered upon, their attention was engaged by the attempts of some Gentile philosophers, who appeared among them ; some with a design to satisfy their curiosity concerning Christianity itself, others wishing to involve the Christians in a cloud of verbal subtilties, and to enjoy the mutual contradictions of the followers of Christ. One of them distinguished himself above the rest by the pomp and arrogance of

his pretensions, and derided the clergy as ignorant and illiterate. On this occasion an old Christian, who had suffered with magnanimous constancy during the late persecutions, though unacquainted with logical forms, undertook to contend with the philosopher. Those who were more earnest to gratify curiosity than to investigate truth, endeavoured to raise a laugh at the old man's expence; while serious spirits were distressed to see a contest apparently so unequal. Respect for the man, however, induced them to permit him to engage; and he immediately addressed the philosopher in these terms: "Hear, philosopher, says he, in the name of Jesus Christ. There is one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, who made all these things by the power of his Word, and confirmed them by the holiness of his Spirit. This Word, whom we call the Son of God, compassionating the sons of men involved in error and wickedness, chose to be born of a woman, to converse with men, and to die for them; and he will come again as the Judge of all things which men have done in the body. That these things are so, we believe in simplicity: do not then labour in vain, investigating the manner in which these things may or may not be, and seeking to confute things which ought to be received by faith; but if thou believest, answer me, now that I ask thee." Struck with this plain authoritative address, the philosopher said, "I do believe;" with pleasure owned himself vanquished, confessed that he embraced the same sentiments with the old man, and advised the other philosophers to do the same, swearing that he was changed by a divine influence, and moved by an energy which he could not explain*.

Men will draw their conclusions from this story, according to their different tastes and views. A

* Sozomen, B. I. c. 18.

self-sufficient reasoner will despise the instruction it contains ; but he who thinks with St. Paul, will consider the whole story as no mean comment on his words, that your “faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God ;” nor will he much regard the prudence of those who labour to accommodate Christian ideas to the spirit of unbelievers, by which they only weaken themselves, and abate not in the least the enmity of their opposers. They will think it better to go forth in simple dependence on God, trusting that he will bless his own word with victorious energy, Such know that even in our own times, there want not instances of conversions of a similar kind ; and those who are still disposed to object, should at least be told, that the story has all the proper marks of historical credibility, whatever inferences they may be pleased to draw from it.

I fear we shall not find in the transactions of the whole Nicene council so instructing a narrative. The emperor himself came to the synod, and exhorted them to peace and unanimity. A number of mutual accusations having been presented to him, he threw them all into the fire, protesting that he had not read one of them, and charged them to forbear, and forgive one another. After this very candid and generous procedure, he gave them leave to enter directly on the business of the synod. They canvassed the doctrine of Arius, extracted his propositions out of his own writings, and argued the subject with great vehemence ; Constantine himself acting as moderator, and endeavouring to bring them to perfect agreement. But it soon appeared, that without some explanatory terms, decisively pointing out what the Scriptures had revealed, it was impossible to guard against the subtilties of the Arians. Did the Trinitarians assert that Christ was God ? the Arians allowed it, but in the same sense as holy men and angels are styled gods in

Scripture. Did they affirm that he was truly God? the others allowed, that he was made so by God. Did they affirm that the Son was naturally of God? it was granted; for even we, said they, are of God, of whom are all things. Was it affirmed, that the Son was the power, wisdom, and image of the Father? we admit it, replied the others, for we also are said to be the image and glory of God. Such is the account* which Athanasius gives of the disputations. He was at that time deacon of the church of Alexandria, and supported his bishop with so much accuracy and strength of argument, as to lay the foundation of that fame, which he afterwards acquired by his zeal in this controversy. What could the Trinitarians do in this situation? to leave the matter undecided, was to do nothing; to confine themselves merely to Scripture terms, was to suffer the Arians to explain the doctrine in their own way, and to reply nothing. Undoubtedly they had a right to comment according to their own judgment, as well as the Arians; and they did so in the following manner. They collected together the passages of Scripture, which represent the Divinity of the Son of God, and observed that taken together they amounted to a proof of his being of the SAME SUBSTANCE WITH THE FATHER, *ὁμοουσιος*. That creatures were indeed said to be of God, because, not existing of themselves, they had their beginning from him; but that the Son was peculiarly of the Father, being of his substance, as begotten of him.

It behoves every one who is desirous of knowing simply the mind of God from his own word, to determine for himself, how far their interpretation of Scripture was true. The Council however was, by the majority before stated, convinced, that this was a fair explanation, and that the Arian use of the terms, God, true God, and the like, was a mere deception, because they affixed to them ideas, which

* See Cave's Life of Athanasius.

the Scriptures would by no means admit. So the most pious Christians have thought in all ages since. But to censure the council for introducing a new term, when all that was meant by it was to express their interpretation of the Scriptures, appears unreasonable to the last degree, however fashionable. To say, that they ought to have confined themselves to the very words of Scripture, when the Arians had first introduced their own gloss, seems much the same, as to say that the Trinitarians had not the same right with the Arians to express their own interpretation of Scripture, and in their own language.

The great patron of the Arians was Eusebius of Nicomedia, who wrote a letter to the council, in which he found fault with the idea of the Son of God being uncreated. The whole Arian party presented also their confession of faith. Both that and the letter of Eusebius were condemned as heretical. The venerable Hosius of Corduba was appointed to draw up a creed, which is in the main the same that is called the Nicene Creed to this day. It soon received the sanction of the Council, and of Constantine himself, who declared, that whoever refused to comply with the decree, should be banished. Eusebius of Cæsarea, the historian, expressed for some time his doubts concerning the term consubstantial. He observed, in a letter which he wrote on this occasion to his church, that all the mischief had arisen from the use of unscriptural terms, and that he at last subscribed to the term for the sake of peace. It would undoubtedly be unjust to accuse this great man of Arianism. Yet why was he so much disposed to favour Arius, by writing to Alexander, as if he had been wronged? why so disposed to join afterwards, as we shall see, against Athanasius? The truth is, he seems to have held a middle notion, that the Son of God was from eternity, but was not Jehovah; the very same notion, if I mistake not, which was

CONSTANTINE.

revived by the famous Dr. Clark, explained in his Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, and I think very solidly confuted by Dr. Waterland, in his reply*.

From the opinion of Eusebius thus ascertained, one may form an idea of Constantine's creed, if indeed he had any distinct one in his mind. Undoubtedly Eusebius was his great favourite, and moulded his imperial disciple as he pleased. But let his opinions have been what they may, he seems not to have been very zealous for any thing, except peace and uniformity. Never was a council more free from political impediments. The bishops undoubtedly spake their sentiments without reserve in general: And Constantine was disposed to give his sanction to any creed, to which the majority should agree. We have here then the testimony of nearly the whole Christian world † in favour of the doctrine of the proper Deity of the Son of God, a testimony free, unbiassed, and unrestrained. How can this be accounted for but hence, that they followed the plain sense of Scripture, and of the Church in preceding ages? As to the connexion between church and state, and the propriety of civil penalties in matters of religion, I may find a more proper place to dwell upon those subjects hereafter.

Arius was deposed, excommunicated, and forbidden to enter Alexandria. The minority at first

* This is what is commonly called high Arianism, and secretly grows among us; the more so, because not distinctly understood, and because it is consistent with some sort of Trinitarian doctrine. It is doubtless the most specious of all heresies. But two questions its defenders seem incapable of answering: 1. Why Christ is so often called Jehovah, the self-existent God, in Scripture? 2. How they can clear themselves of the charge of holding more Gods than one?

† Not a few of the Nicene fathers bore on their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. Paul, bishop of Neocæsarea at the banks of Euphrates, had been debilitated by the application of hot iron to both his hands: others appeared there deprived of their right eyes, others deprived of their legs. A crowd of martyrs in truth were seen collected into one body.—Theodoret, B. I. c. 7.

refused to subscribe, but, being advised to yield at length by Constantia their patroness, the emperor's sister, they consented. But by the insertion of a single letter they reserved to themselves their own sense, subscribing, not that the Son is the same, but only of a like essence with the Father*. Honesty is however always respectable. Out of twenty-two Arian bishops, two were found who persisted in refusing; Secundus of Ptolemais, and Theonas of Marmarica: the former of whom bluntly rebuked the courtly Eusebius of Nicomedia for his dissimulation. Arius and his associates were banished into Illyricum.

The Meletian controversy was also settled. Meletius was permitted to live in his own city, with the title of bishop, but without authority. His sect was indulged in some degree, and continued a long time after in the church. The dispute concerning Easter was likewise finally adjusted in this council.

The canons appointed by this famous council will deserve a remark or two, as at least they may give us some idea of the state and spirit of Christian religion at that time.

One of them forbids clergymen to make themselves eunuchs; which shows that there were then instances of the same misguided zeal, which Origen in early life had exhibited. Another forbids the ordination of new converts, and supports itself by that well-known canon of still higher authority; "Not a Novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." A third provides for the chastity of the clergy. The council were even proceeding to restrain those of them who had wives from cohabiting with them, after their

* Not *ομοῦσιος*, but *ομοιουσιος*. It is remarkable, that this duplicity of theirs is recorded by Philostorgius the Arian historian. —See Cave's Life of Athanasius.

ordination ; but were checked by Paphnutius, a bishop of Thebais, who had lost an eye during the late persecutions. He had himself been brought up in a monastery from his childhood, and was renowned for the purity of his manners. He observed that it was sufficient for a man once ordained to be prohibited to marry, but that he ought not to be separated from the wife whom he had married when a layman. The authority of a person so eminent in sanctity was decisive ; and this species of superstition, which had already made considerable advances, was stopped for the present in its career. Moreover some care was taken in this council against the progress of covetousness in the clergy, by the prohibition of the practice of usury. Translations also either of bishops, priests, or deacons, from one city to another, were forbidden, Eusebius of Nicomedia had been removed from Berytus, and the abuse began to grow into a custom. In all these cases, a desire of preserving purity of manners in the Church, though not in all points regulated with discretion, is observable. The same remark may be extended to another canon, which regulates the reception of penitent apostates, by directing that they shall continue three years among the auditors, and shall prostrate themselves seven years. A distinction also is made between those, who evinced by good works the sincerity of repentance, and those who appeared indifferent, and were merely formal in compliance with the rules of the church. And greater rigour of penance is prescribed to the latter*.

These things show that the fear of God was by no means extinct. Discipline, which had been relaxed toward the close of the last century, was revived, and the predominant spirit of superstition carried it as formerly, into too great an extreme. Our age, which has lost almost all discipline in church-affairs, can scarcely appreciate aright the merit of these

* Fleury, B. XI. 16.

rules, on account of the strength of its prejudices against all restraints.

Liberty was allowed to the Novatians also to return to the communion of the general church, nor was it insisted on, that they should be re-baptized, since they held nothing contrary to the fundamentals of godliness. With respect to the followers of Paul of Samosata, called Paulianists, some of whom still subsisted, it was required, that if they were admitted again into the church, they should be re-baptized, because they did not baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. So accurately did they distinguish between a heretic and a schismatic, between essentials and circumstantials. Apostolical discernment and piety, in no contemptible degree, animated the spirits of the Nicene fathers, notwithstanding the decline of piety from the primitive times. Constantine, zealous for a pacific uniformity, had invited Acesius, a Novatian bishop, to the council, and asked him whether he assented to the decrees concerning the faith, and the observation of Easter. The council, says he, has decreed nothing new concerning these things. So I have always understood the church has received, even from the times of the Apostles. Why then, says the emperor, do you separate yourself from our communion? Because, replied Acesius, we think that to apostatize is the "sin unto death," and that those who are guilty of it ought never to be restored to the communion of the Church, though they are to be invited to repentance, and to be left to God, who alone has the power of forgiving sins. Constantine, who saw that his views were impracticably severe, said, "Set up a ladder, Acesius, and climb up to heaven by yourself."

Socrates * tells us, that he had this from a very credible old person, who had seen these things done in the council. He means most probably the

* B. I. c. 10.

Novatian dissenter, with whom he was intimately acquainted. Candour and moderation appear very visible in Socrates as an historian, and render him as credible a writer as any guide of those times. On this very respectable evidence then it is manifest, that a Novatian bishop, whose passions could no way be heated by the internal contentions of the general Church, believed the common doctrine of the Trinity, and believed that it had always been common. The narrowness of the Novatian principle of dissent prevented not the soundness of his faith and the general integrity of his mind. Nor is there any blemish laid to the charge of this people, except excessive severity. And it ought to be acknowledged to the honour of Constantine and the Nicene fathers, that while they exercised severity in civil matters towards heretical members of their own church, they allowed and continued the religious toleration of the Novatians in its full extent. But we have surely in this case an additional proof of the antiquity of the Nicene faith. We see in what light the matter appeared to a plain honest man, who had no concern in the commotions of the times, who had nothing to obtain or to lose for himself in the contest, whose character appears unsullied, and who most probably was a pious person. He has no doubt respecting the common creed of the church, and though a separatist, he affirms that she had always held the proper Divinity of Jesus Christ. I do not find that the second set of dissenters, the Donatists, were called into this council. They continued still in a tolerable state, but never seem to have had any effusion of the Divine Spirit among them. The third sort, the Meletians, seemed likely to be broken up by the death of their founder; but as he named to himself a successor, they continued still in a state of separation, though a number of them returned to the church.

CHAP.
III.Death of
Alexander.Athanasius
succeeds
him.

Three months after the dissolution of the synod Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nice were banished, by the emperor's command, for attempting still to support the Arian cause.

Alexander dying five months after his return home, had desired that Athanasius might be appointed his successor. Alexander in general joined in the same request, which the modesty of Athanasius resisted a considerable time. His integrity and his abilities however pointed him out as a proper successor to the zealous Alexander. And he was at last ordained, with the strongest testimonies of general satisfaction. He was not then above twenty-eight years of age, and he held the see forty-six years, and for that time with little intermission was exposed to persecution on account of his zeal against Arianism : and it must be owned, that constancy and firmness in a cause were never better tried than his were, through the whole course of this period.

After the death of Helena, Constantine showed particular kindness to Constantia his sister, who was much led by a presbyter secretly in the Arian interest. They persuaded her that Arius and his friends were unjustly condemned. She on her death-bed prevailed by her intreaties on Constantine to do justice to these men. The emperor, who seemed as much a child in religious discernment as he was a man in political sagacity, suffered himself to be imposed on by the ambiguous craft of Arius and his friend Euzoius, so as to write in their favour to the Churches*. Eusebius also, and Theognis, by owning the Nicene faith in words, were restored to their sees†. The former wrote to Athanasius, desiring him to receive Arius, now returned from banishment, to communion ; but in vain. Athanasius had principle, and could not sport with subscriptions and bonds, as his adversaries did. The Nicene creed had still all the sanction which church

* Sozomen, B. II. c. 27.

† Ibid B. II. c. 16.

and state could give it. It was not at that time possible by all the artifices of ingenious and unprincipled men to persuade the Christian world, that the Scripture held what it did not, or that their fathers had all along thought as Arius did. Even the chiefs of Arianism had been now restored, not as Arians, but as men well affected to the doctrine of the Trinity. And they attempted by subtilty and artifice to establish at length what was impossible to be done by fair argument. Determined to ruin Athanasius, if possible, they united themselves closely with the Meletians, and infected them with their heresy. They procured the deposition of Eustathius of Antioch, an eloquent and learned professor, who was, on unjust pretences, banished from his see : This person, before his departure, exhorted his flock to be steadfast in the truth, and his words were of great weight with that flourishing church. He and several priests and deacons were banished. The good man bore the will of God with meekness and patience, and died in exile at Philippi. Eusebius of Cæsarea and Eustathius had opposed each other in matters of doctrine. The vacant see was now offered to the former, who prudently declined it. Asclepas of Gaza, and Eutropius of Adrianople, were driven also from their sees. And thus while the truth was supported in form, its friends by a variety of artifices were persecuted, and its enemies triumphed. A case not uncommon in our own times ! Men void of principle had every secular advantage, while those who feared God, chose rather to suffer than to sin.

Among these Athanasius himself was eminently distinguished. To relate the various turns and changes of his life, by no means suits the design of this history : yet some account is necessary, that the reader may see BY FACTS, what sort of fruit was produced by Trinitarian, and what by Arian principles.

The repeated attempts of the adversaries of

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH :

Aspius at length so far prevailed in prejudicing the mind of the emperor, that he ordered a synod convened at Tyre, not to examine the principles of the bishop, which even his adversaries had obliged to admit, but to institute an inquiry, whether various crimes, with which he was charged, had been really committed. In the year 335, the council met under the direction of Eusebius of Cæsarea, and some other bishops ; before whom the bishop of Alexandria, attended by certain Egyptian bishops, was obliged to appear. Here Potamo, bishop of Alexandria, who had been in prison with Eusebius during the Dioclesian persecution, enraged to see the emperor on the bench, rudely addressed him thus : " Must you, Eusebius, sit on the bench, while the innocent Athanasius stands to be judged at your bar ? Can you bear such proceedings ? Were not you in prison with me in the time of the persecution ? I lost my life in defence of the truth ; you have no wound now, but are both alive and whole. How got you out of prison, unless you promised to sacrifice, or actually did so ?" Eusebius rose up and dissolved the council for that time, reproving him for his insolence. The story throws no light on the subject of Potamo's accusations ; nor does he seem to have had any proof to support them. Nevertheless Eusebius, who himself so much supported the calumnies vented against Athanasius, had of all men the least right to complain. He suffered the same things which he inflicted on others ; and Satan, having deeply poisoned the passions of men, continued thus to excite and to inflame the Christian world. The heaviest crimes were charged upon Athanasius—rebellion, oppression, rape and murder. But nothing appeared to be the result of malice. One case alone shall be mentioned, by which a true opinion may be formed of all the rest. He was accused to have murdered Arsenius, a Meletian bishop ; in proof of which the accusers produced a box,

out of which they took a dead man's hand, dried and salted, which they affirmed to be the hand of Arsenius, and that it was preserved by Athanasius for magical purposes. The Meletians charged Arsenius to conceal himself till they had effected their purpose. The party of Eusebius of Nicomedia spread the report through the Christian world, that Arsenius had been privately murdered by the bishop of Alexandria, and Constantine himself, overcome by incessant importunities, was induced to order an inquiry to be made*.

Athanasius had learned by his own experience, that any accusation against himself, however improbable, was likely to find numerous and powerful supports. But Providence wonderfully confuted this attempt. Arsenius, notwithstanding the directions of the accusers to keep close, had privately conveyed himself to Tyre, intending to be secreted there during the whole time of the synod. It happened, that some servants belonging to Archelaus the governor, heard a rumour whispered, that Arsenius was in town. This they immediately told their master, who found him out, apprehended him, and gave notice to Athanasius. The Meletian tool, unwilling to blast his employers, and feeling the awkwardness of his situation, at first denied himself to be Arsenius. Happily, Paul the bishop of Tyre, who knew the man, deprived him of that refuge. The day of trial being come, the prosecutors boasted that they should give ocular demonstration to the court, of the guilt of Athanasius, and produced the dead hand. A shout of victory rung through the synod. Silence being made, Athanasius asked the judges, if any of them knew Arsenius? Several affirming that they did, Athanasius directs the man to be brought into the court, and asks, is this the man whom I murdered, and whose hand I cut off? Athanasius turns back the man's cloak, and

Athanasius
calumni-
ated.

* Socrates, B. I. c. 27.

shows one of his hands ; after a little pause, he puts back the other side of the cloak, and shows the other hand. “Gentlemen, you see,” said he, “that Arsenius has both his hands ; how the accusers came by the third hand, let them explain.” Thus ended the plot to the shame of the contrivers.

That any persons, who bear the name of Christ, should deliberately be guilty of such villainy, is deeply to be regretted. But let it be remembered, that the real faith of Christ was opposed to those who were concerned in this base act, and that enmity to the doctrine of the Trinity produced it. The story itself deserves also to be preserved as a memorable instance of the interposition of Divine Providence.

Notwithstanding the clearest proofs of Athanasius’s innocence, and that the whole course of his life was extremely opposite to such crimes as he was charged with, his enemies prevailed so far, that commissioners were dispatched into Egypt, to examine the matters of which he was accused. Yet John, the Meletian bishop, the chief contriver of the plot, confessed his fault to Athanasius, and begged his forgiveness. And Arsenius himself renounced his former connexions, and desired to be received into communion with the Alexandrian prelate.

Egypt, where Athanasius must have been best known, was faithful to her prelate. Forty-seven bishops of that country entered a protest against the injustice of the council, but in vain. The Arian commissioners arrived at Alexandria, and endeavoured to extort evidence against him by drawn swords, whips, clubs, and all engines of cruelty*. The Alexandrian clergy desired to be admitted to give evidence, but were refused. To the number of fifteen presbyters and four deacons they remonstrated, but to no purpose. The Maræotic clergy took the same steps, but to no purpose. The delegates returned with extorted evidence to Tyre,

* Epist. Synod, Alexan. Athan.

whence Athanasius, who saw no justice was to be had, had fled. They passed sentence, and deposed him from his bishopric.

Yet there were those in the synod of Tyre, who were willing to do justice to the much-injured prelate. Paphnutius, who has been before mentioned, took Maximus, bishop of Jerusalem, by the hand; "Let us be gone," said he, "it becomes not those who have lost their limbs for religion, to go along with such pernicious company." But the majority were very differently disposed.

Athanasius came to Constantinople, and desired justice from the emperor, and a fair trial. Constantine ordered the bishops of the synod to appear before him, and to give an account of what they had done. The greatest part of them returned home; but the genius of Eusebius of Nicomedia was not exhausted, and as he stuck at no fraud, and was ashamed of no villiany, he, with a few of the synod, went to Constantinople, and waving the old accusations, he brought a fresh one, namely, that Athanasius had threatened to stop the fleet that brought corn from Alexandria to Constantinople. Constantine was credulous enough to be moved by the report: the Arian arts prevailed at court: those who used no arms but truth and honesty, were foiled for the present; and Athanasius was banished to Treves in Gaul.

Banishment
of Atha-
nasius.

Arius, flushed with the success of his party, returned to Alexandria, and strengthened the hands of the heretics, who had long languished for want of his abilities. The city being torn with intestine divisions, the emperor ordered the heresiarch to come to Constantinople, and there to give an account of his conduct. That imperial city was now the chief seat of the contention. But Providence had given her a bishop not unequal to the contest. This was Alexander of Constantinople, a man of eminent piety and integrity, whose character at least seems

to have approached as near to that of a primitive Christian as did that of any persons who distinguished themselves at this period. Eusebius of Nicomedia menaced him with deposition and exile, unless he consented to receive Arius into the church. On the one hand, the prelate knew too well the power of the Arians by what they had done already; and the Trinitarians were so far outmatched by them in sublety and artifice, that though victorious in argument in the face of the whole world, with the council of Nice, and an orthodox emperor on their side, they yet were persecuted and oppressed, and their enemies prevailed at court. But on the other hand, it behoved not a Christian bishop to consent to the admission of an artful sectarian who could agree in form to the Nicene faith, and yet gradually insinuate his poisonous doctrines into the church. What were this but in fact to allow the wolf to enter the sheep-fold, and devour the flock? The mind of Alexander was directed aright in this conjuncture. He spent several days and nights in prayer alone in his church; the faithful followed his example, and prayer was made by the Church without ceasing, that God would interfere on this occasion. Controversies and the arts of logic were omitted; and they, who believed that the Nicene faith was holy, and of most interesting concern to the souls of men, sincerely committed their cause to God.

But Constantine himself was not to be prevailed on to admit Arius into the church, unless he could be convinced of his orthodoxy. He sent for him therefore to the palace, and asked him plainly, whether he agreed to the Nicene decrees. The heresiarch, without hesitation, subscribed: the emperor ordered him to swear: he assented to this also. I follow the narrative of Socrates, one of the most candid and moderate historians, who tells us that he had heard, that Arius had under his arm a written paper of his real sentiments, and that he swore that

he believed as he had written. Whether he used this equivocation or not, is far from being clear. But Socrates, who is careful to tell us that he heard this reported, assures us that he did swear in addition to his subscriptions, and that this he knew from the emperor's epistles*. Constantine, whose scruples were now overcome, ordered Alexander to receive him into the church the next day. The good bishop had given himself to fasting and prayer, and renewed his supplications that day with great fervour in the church, prostrate before the altar, and attended by Macarius only, who was a presbyter belonging to Athanasius. He begged, that if Arius was in the right, he himself might not live to see the day of contest; but if the faith was true, which he professed, that Arius, the author of all the evils, might suffer the punishment of his impiety. The next day seemed to be a triumphant one to the Arians: the heads of the party paraded through the city with Arius in the midst, and drew the attention of all toward them. When they came nigh the forum of Constantine, a sudden terror, with a disorder of the intestines, seized Arius. In his urgent necessity, he requested to be directed to a place of private retirement. Agreeably to the information he received, he hastened behind the forum; and there he poured forth his bowels with a vast effusion of blood.

Death of
Arius.

A. D.
336.

Such was the exit of the famous Arius. The place of his death was memorable to posterity, and was shewn in the times of Socrates†. The united tes-

* B. I. c. 8.

† Sozomen tells us, that some time after a rich Arian bought the place, changed its form, and built there a house, that the event might gradually sink into oblivion. It must not be denied, however, that Arius also took pains to propagate his sentiments by methods more honourable than those of duplicity and fraud, in which he was so eminently versed. His historian Philostorgius, of whom some fragments remain, assures us, that he composed songs for sailors, millers, and travellers, tending to support this heresy.

CHAP.
III.

timony of ancient historians leaves no room to doubt of the fact. The reflections to be made upon it will vary, as men believe and are disposed. That it is usual with God to hear the prayers of his Church, and to answer them remarkably on extraordinary occasions, will not be denied by those who reverence the word of God, and who remember the case of Hezekiah in the Old Testament*, and of Peter in the New †. That the danger of the Church from heresy was particularly great at this time, will be equally admitted by all who believe that the Trinitarian doctrine includes within it whatever is most precious and interesting in the Gospel : that here on one side an appeal was made to God in his own appointed way, in faith, prayer, patience, and sincerity ; while the other side dealt in falsehood, artifice, ambition and worldly policy, is evident from the narrative. From these premises a man who fears God will feel it his duty to believe that God interposed to comfort his Church, and to confound its adversaries. I see no method of avoiding this conclusion. The translator of Mosheim seems put to a great difficulty, when he declares it extremely probable that he was poisoned by his enemies. A more absurd and unwarranted imagination never entered into the heart of man. And, surely, such things ought not to have been said, without some proof or probable circumstance. Certain it is, that the fear of God rested with the Trinitarians, though it was at too low an ebb among all parties. Among these, however, nothing like SUCH wickedness appears ; while the Arians evidently seem to have been given up to the greatest villainies and profligacy. Great was the joy of the aged bishop to find that God had not forsaken his Church. What effect the event had on Constantine, appears not. He died soon after, about the sixty-fifth year of his age, having first received baptism from Eusebius of Nicomedia.

Death of the
Emperor
Constantine,

A. D.
337.

* Isaiah xxxvii.

† Acts xii.

This he had long delayed, and the custom, from the imperial example, would naturally gather fresh strength. Superstition had by this time taught men to connect by a necessary union the forgiveness of sins with the administration of the rite: and men who loved to continue in sin protracted their baptism to a time when they imagined it might be of the greatest advantage to them. I have nothing more to say of Constantine's religious character, than that it appears to have been much of the same sort as that of his panegyrist Eusebius, whose pompous life of this emperor gives no very favourable idea of the writer's own views of Christianity.

CHAP. IV.

THE PROGRESS OF THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY
DURING THE REIGN OF CONSTANTIUS.

THE subject before us is more speculative and more secular than I could wish. I shall condense it as much as possible into a narrow compass, keeping more particularly in view the one great end of this history.

The great Constantine was succeeded by three sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans. The first ruled in Spain and Gaul, the second in the East, the third in Italy and Africa. The other relations of the late emperor were put to death by the soldiers. Two sons alone of Julius his brother survived, Gallus and Julian. These were spared, privately educated, placed among the clergy, and appointed readers in the church. The latter was born at Constantinople, was only eight years old at the time of his uncle's death, and was reserved to be a scourge of degenerate Christendom, and a memorable instrument of Divine Providence.

Of Constantine the eldest we know but little;

and that little is laudable. He sent back Athanasius to his church with great respect, and declared, that his father had intended to do the same, but was prevented by death. After a banishment of two years and four months, the bishop returned from Treves to his diocese, where he was received with general acclamations. Asclepas of Gaza and Marcellus of Ancyra, who had been deposed by Arians, with others likewise, were restored; but Constantine himself was slain by the troops of his brother Constans. He was undoubtedly steady in his adherence to the Nicene faith, but our information concerning him is too small to enable us to form any proper estimate of his character.

His next brother, Constantius, furnishes but too many materials to illustrate his disposition. One Eusebius an eunuch, his chamberlain, had great influence over him; and was himself the convert of the Arian priest, whom Constantia had recommended to her brother, and to whom also the dying emperor had intrusted his will. The empress herself, the wife of Constantius, was infected with Arianism. By degrees at least the emperor, a man of a weak understanding, corrupted with the pride of power, and ill informed in any thing that belonged to real Christianity, was confirmed in the fashionable heresy. There was then during this whole reign, which reached from the year 337 to the year 361, a controversy carried on between the Church and the heretics by arms and resources suited to the genius of the parties; those of the former were prayers, treatises, and preaching; of the latter, policy, intrigue, persecution, and the friendship of the great. The most zealous supporters of anti-scriptural sentiments seem far more disposed to cultivate the favour of men of rank, than to labour in the work of the ministry among the bulk of mankind.

Death of
Eusebius of
Cæsarea.

A. D.
340.

About the year 340 died the famous Eusebius of Cæsarea. He was the most learned of all the

Christians. After viewing him with some attention, I can put no other interpretation on his speculations than that which has been mentioned already*. He talks of a necessity that there was in God, to produce a middle power between himself and the angels, to lessen the infinite disproportion between him and the creature. Of the Holy Ghost he speaks still more explicitly, and represents him as one of the things made by the Son. Nevertheless, one might be disposed to put a favourable construction on various expressions of this great man, were it not that his practice is a strong comment on his opinions. He frequented the court, he associated with Arius, he joined in the condemnation of Athanasians. It really gives pain to part on such terms with the historian, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of so many valuable monuments of antiquity; but truth must be spoken, and his case is one of the many, which show that learning and philosophy, unless duly subordinate to the revealed will of God, are no friends to christian simplicity: however, the loud noise which in our times has been made, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity being derived from Platonism, should be silenced, when it is known that it was by admiration of Plato and Origen that Eusebius himself was perverted.

About the same time died Alexander of Constantinople, aged ninety-eight years, who had been bishop twenty-three years. His clergy asked him in his dying moments, whom he would recommend as his successor. If you seek a man of exemplary life, and able to instruct you, says he, you have Paul: if you desire a man of secular skill, and one who knows how to maintain an interest among the great, and to preserve an appearance of religion, Macedonius is preferable. The event showed in what strength of discernment the aged prelate was still preserved, and how careful to his last breath he was

Death of
Alexander
of Constantinople.

* IV. Demonstr. Evang. I. c. 6. See Fleury, B. XII. c. 6.

of the propagation of Evangelical purity. These two men were just such as he had described them. Paul, though young, was at once pious and discreet; Macedonius was far advanced in life, but yet was only a deacon. The Arian party during the lifetime of the venerable champion was unable to predominate in the metropolis. After his death, they endeavoured to prefer Macedonius; but the primitive ideas were too prevalent as yet among the populace, and Paul was elected. Constantius arriving afterwards was provoked at the election, encouraged an Arian council, directed its resolves, and Eusebius of Nicomedia was translated to the metropolitan see, which from this time continued under Arian government for forty years. Thus the ancient usages in choosing bishops were altered, and a precedent was set, of fixing in the hands of princes the government of the church in capital cities. A council of a hundred bishops of Egypt, with Athanasius at their head, protested against these proceedings to the whole Christian world.

Council at
Antioch.

A council was now convened at Antioch, supported by the presence of the emperor and by the manœuvres of Eusebius. Here they undertook to depose Athanasius, and ordain Gregory, a Cappadocian, in his room; prevailing on Constantius to direct Philagrius, the prefect of Egypt, to support their proceedings with an armed force. For, the integrity and probity of Athanasius had gained him so strong an ascendant in Egypt, that while the primitive modes of church government remained, it would have been impossible to expel him. Violence was found necessary to support iniquity, and an Arian prince was obliged to tread in the steps of his pagan predecessors, to support what he called the Church.

His views were promoted with vigour. Virgins and monks were cruelly treated at Alexandria: Jews and pagans were encouraged to murder Chris-

tians*. Gregory himself entered the church with the governor and certain pagans, and caused a number of the friends of Athanasius to be scourged and imprisoned. The persecuted prelate himself, who wanted not courage and capacity to resist, acted however a much more Christian part. He fled from the storm, and made his escape to Rome.

Athanasius
escapes to
Rome.

A. D.

342.

This also happened about the year 342. It was a memorable season for the church of God, which now found her livery to be that of persecution, even when pagans had ceased to reign. Gregory would not suffer the Athanasians, who in great numbers still refused to own the Arian domination, even to pray in their own houses. He visited Egypt in company with Philagrius. The greatest severities were inflicted on those bishops who had been zealous for the Nicene faith, though the decrees of the council had never been reversed, and the Arians as yet contented themselves with ambiguous confessions and the omission of the term consubstantial. Bishops were scourged and put in irons. Potamo, whom we have before celebrated, was beaten on the neck, till he was thought to have expired; he recovered in a small degree, but died some time after. His crime, in the eyes of the Arians, was doubtless an unvaried attachment to the Nicene faith.

While Gregory dealt in violence, his competitor used only the more Christians arms of argument. He published an epistle to the Christian world†, exhorting all the bishops to unite on the occasion. “The faith is now begun,” says he, “it came to us by the Lord from his disciples. Lest what has been preserved in the churches until now perish in our days, and we be called to an account for our stewardship, exert yourselves my brethren, as stewards of the mysteries of God, and as beholding your

* Apolog. Athan. 2. Fleury, B. II. 14.

† Athan. VI. p. 943.

rights taken away by strangers." He goes on to inform them of the proceedings of the Arians, observing that the like had not happened in the church since the ascension of our Saviour. "If there were any complaint against me, the people should have been assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the spirit of ordination; all things should have been examined regularly, and in the presence of the clergy and people; a stranger should not have been intruded by force and the authority of secular judges, upon a people who neither require nor know him." He begs the bishops "not to receive the letters of Gregory, but to tear them, and treat the bearers with disdain as ministers of iniquity." It cannot be denied, that his arguments were sound, and that his cause was just. The Arians must bear the infamy of being the first who secularized the discipline of the church. But in adding the close of the letter, I mean the reader to remark the decline of the spirit of the Gospel at this time. As on the one hand it were very unfair to confound the Athanasians and the Arians as on an equal footing in point of piety and morality, when the superiority of the former is too evident to admit of a dispute; so on the other hand it is certain, that the experimental use of the Divinity of Christ, by no means employed an equal degree of the zeal of its patrons with the abstract doctrine itself. Hence Athanasius, though always firm and constantly sincere, fails in meekness and charity.

Death of
Eusebius of
Constanti-
nople.

This great man continued in exile at Rome for eighteen months, under the protection of Julius the bishop. Thither fled many others whom the Arian tyranny had expelled from their sees. Eusebius of Constantinople died soon after in the fulness of that prosperity, which his iniquity and oppression had procured him. Human depravity under religious appearances had in him attained a rare degree of

maturity. And the only lesson which his life affords seems to be this, to warn the clergy to beware of secular ambition, and the spirit of the world, which so exceedingly depraved this dignitary, that he at length became one of the most memorable villains in history. A double election followed his death, that of Paul and that of Macedonius. Hermogenes, master of * the militia, was ordered by the emperor to banish Paul. He did so; and Paul's friends, exasperated by a series of persecutions, forgot the character of Christians, and killed Hermogenes. These events took place in or near the year 342. Paul however was then banished the city, and his holy character exempts him from all suspicion of being concerned in the outrage.

Banishment
of Paul.

Hermoge-
nes killed.

At Rome, Julius, in a council of the western bishops, justified Athanasius and his fellow sufferers. Among these was Marcellus of Ancyra, whose zeal against the Arians had provoked them to charge him with Sabellianism. It is not the design of this history to enlarge on these niceties. But it is easy to conceive how such a charge might be drawn up with specious appearances. Marcellus explained, and was cleared to the satisfaction of the council; but whether justly or not, is not so evident. The progress of error is easy, where the heart is not simply stayed upon God. Athanasius himself was afterwards far from being convinced of his soundness in the faith.

Julius wrote a public letter on this occasion, in which, after doing full justice to the sufferers, he concludes in a manner not unworthy of a Christian bishop, not threatening, but advising those of the East not to do the like for the future, lest, says he, we be exposed to the laughter of Pagans, and above all to the wrath of God, to whom we must all give an account at the day of judgment.

* Fleury, B. XII. 21.

Council at
Sardica,
A. D.
347.

In the year 347, a council was held at Sardica by the joint order of the two emperors, Constantius and Constans, the latter being as steady in the support of the Nicene faith as the former was in opposition. Sardica was in Illyria, the border of the dominions of the two emperors. The intention was to unite, but it actually separated the two parties more than ever. Prayer and holy breathings of soul, and judicious and affectionate preaching of practical religion, were now at a low ebb. Peaceable spirits were absorbed in superstition, turbulent ones in ecclesiastical contentions. The life of faith was little known. They treated the doctrine of the Trinity as a mere speculation, and the result of their disputes was, that each party retired as they entered upon them. The Easterns finding that it was likely to be a free council, departed from it, leaving the Westerns to settle matters as they pleased. Hosius of Corduba, the venerable president of Nice, presided here also, and the Athanasian cause was decided in the favour of the Alexandrian prelate. They made also some canons, in which they condemned the translation of bishops. The pious and zealous spirit of Hosius was chiefly concerned in these things. Remarkable are the words: "A pernicious custom must be rooted out. None have been found to pass from a greater bishopric to a less. Therefore they are induced by avarice and ambition." So reasoned and so ordained this council. But where the religion of the Holy Ghost, the religion of faith, hope, and charity, exist not, the canons of councils forbid in vain. There are several canons also which enjoin the residence of bishops, and which forbid their journeys to courts. The time also of bishops remaining in another diocese was fixed, in order to prevent the supplanting of their brethren. These things show the times: rules are not made, except to prevent abuses, which already exist.

The Easterns met at Philippopolis, in Thrace, and

excommunicated their brethren of the West; and for some time the two parties remained distant in this manner; while in Asia and Egypt the friends of the Nicene faith were treated with great cruelty. Into Europe the subtilties of this contention had not yet entered; men were there more simple, and followed the primitive faith in quietness and peace*.

In Antioch the Arian bishop Stephen was found, even by his own party, too corrupt and profligate to be continued in his dignity. Leontius, who succeeded him, supported the Arian cause. Diodorus, an ascetic, and Flavian, afterwards bishop of Antioch, stirred up the faithful to a zeal for religion, and passed whole nights with them at the tombs of the martyrs. Leontius finding them to have the affection of the people, wished them to do this service in the church. And here I apprehend was a nursery of real godliness, but the account is very imperfect.

In the year 349 died Gregory, the secular bishop of Alexandria, as he may be justly called. Then it was that Constantius, intimidated by the threats of his brother Constans, wrote repeatedly to Athanasius to return into the East, and to assure him of his favour and protection. The exiled prelate could not easily credit a man who had persecuted him so unrighteously. At length he complied, and after visiting Julius at Rome, who sent a letter full of tenderness to the church of Alexandria in favour of Athanasius, he travelled to Antioch, where Constantius then was, by whom he was very graciously received. The emperor requested him to forget the past, and assured him with oaths, that he would receive no calumnies against him for the future. While Athanasius was at Antioch, he communicated with the Eustathians, who under the direction of Flavian held a conventicle there. This same Flavian was the first who composed the doxology, "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" and in the

Death of
Gregory,
bishop of
Alexandria,

A. D.

349.

Athanasius
goes to An-
tioch.

* Fleury, C. 43.

singing of the Psalms, not only those who frequented his meeting made use of it, but in general all who favoured the Nicene faith in the church of Leontius did the same, in opposition to the Arian doxology. Glory to the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Ghost. So earnest were the two parties against each other. Leontius was a confirmed Arian, but of a milder temper than the rest of his party. He saw that it was by force only that he was in possession of his church; numbers of people still professing the Nicene faith. He dared not therefore oppose the Trinitarian hymns, and laboured to preserve peace in his own time; but touching his white hair, he said on the occasion, "When this snow shall melt, there will be much dirt," hinting at the dissensions which he imagined would arise after his death.

Constantius observed to Athanasius, that as he now put him into possession of all his Egyptian churches, he ought to leave one for the Arians. The Alexandrian prelate confessed it would be just, on condition also that the same liberty was allowed to the Eustathians at Antioch. The Arian party, however, sensible of the superior popularity of their opposers, thought it most prudent to wave the proposal*.

Athanasius
returns to
Alexandria.

The return of Athanasius to Alexandria was a triumph. Religious zeal and joy appeared in the garb of the age, by a number devoting themselves to a monastic life. Acts of mercy and liberality were also abundantly performed. Every house seemed to be a church set apart for prayer. Such are the views which Athanasius himself gives us of the effects of his restoration†: a number of his enemies retracted, and justified him in the most honourable manner, and among these the recantation of Ursatius and Valens is remarkable. Asclepas was also restored to Gaza, and Marcellus to Ancyra, though the

* Socrates, B. III. c. 20.

† Athan. ad Solit. See Fleury, B. XII. c. 52.

latter was not unmolested. The suspicion of his unsoundness was perhaps justly increased by the less ambiguous sentiments of Photinus bishop of Sirmium, who was supposed to tread in his steps, and was in a council at that place deposed as a Sabellian by universal consent. Germanius an Arian was elected in his stead, and then, as well as at this day, the Sabellians and the Arians in opposing each other assaulted the truth, which lay between them: the former removing all distinction between the Father and the Son, the latter establishing a distinction which took away the Trinity of the Godhead. Each desired to remove the mystery from the doctrine, and in the attempt corrupted it. While those who were taught of God, and were content with inadequate ideas, sincerely worshipped the Trinity in Unity, and mourned over the abominations of the times.

A great change in civil affairs having taken place by the death of Constans, and the ruin of the usurper Magnentius, Constantius, now sole master of the empire, revived the persecution. About the year 351, Paul of Constantinople was sent into Mesopotamia, loaded with irons, and at length to Cucusus on the confines of Cappadocia. There, after suffering cruel hardships, he was strangled*. Macedonius by an armed force, attended with much effusion of blood, took possession of the see. Paul received the crown of martyrdom, and the Arians seemed ambitious to equal the bloody fame of Galerius.

Martyrdom
of Paul of
Constanti-
nople,

A. D.

351.

The weak mind of Constantius was again prejudiced by absurd calumnies against Athanasius, and a council at Milan was convened in the year 355, in the presence of the emperor, who proposed to them an Arian creed, which he recommended by this argument, that God had declared in his favour by his victories. Prosperity, it seems, had not

Council at
Milan,

A. D.

355.

* Theodoret, B. XI. c. 5.

strengthened his reasoning powers, but, unhappily, had increased the depravity of his heart. Here appeared the magnanimous constancy of Lucifer bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, and the pious self-denial of Eusebius bishop of Vercellæ in Italy. These prelates were animated with a sincere spirit of piety on this occasion, and answered that the Nicene faith had always been the faith of the Church. "I ask not your advice, says the emperor, and you shall not hinder me from following Arius, if I think fit." The emperor's creed was read in the Church; but the people, more sincere and more simple than the great, and more willingly attached to the doctrine of the Trinity, because they read it in their Bibles, rejected the faith of Constantius, and it was not pressed any farther. The condemnation of Athanasius was, however, insisted on, and Dionysius bishop of Milan, and the two others just mentioned, were most unreasonably required to subscribe to it. "Obey, or be banished," was the imperious mandate. The bishops lifted up their hands to heaven, and told Constantius, that the empire was not his, but God's, and reminded him of the day of judgment. He drew his sword on them in a rage, but contented himself with ordering their banishment. Hilary the deacon was stripped and scourged, and ridiculed by Ursatius and Valens, who had recanted some time ago. Hilary blessed God, and bore the indignity as a Christian. The greatest part of the bishops subscribed to the condemnation of Athanasius: a few only testified that the grace of God was still as powerful as ever, in supporting his people, and in causing them to suffer gladly, rather than to sin. Others, besides the three mentioned above, joined in the same measure, particularly Maximus, bishop of Naples, who was tortured in hopes of forcing his submission, because of the weakness of his body. In the end he was banished, and died in exile.

Eusebius of Vercellæ was sent into Palestine,

Lucifer into Syria, and Dionysius into Cappadocia where he died soon after. Liberius of Rome was in an advanced age, when the storm which had murmured at a distance, burst upon him: He was carried before Constantius at Milan, where the eunuch Eusebius, the secret and prevalent supporter of Arianism, assisted the emperor in oppressing him. Liberius said, "Though I were single, the cause of the faith would not fail: there was a time when three persons only were found who resisted a regal ordinance." Eusebius understanding his allusion to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered, "Do you make the emperor a Nebuchadnezzar?" "No," said the bishop of Rome, but you are not less unreasonable than he, in desiring to condemn a man unheard." In the conclusion Liberius was banished into Thrace. But a character still more venerable than his was yet unsubdued, and the Arians, fiercely pursuing their victories, proceeded to the attack. Hosius, bishop of Corduba in Spain, was now a hundred years old. He was looked on as the first of bishops, had been a confessor under the Dioclesian persecution, had presided sixty years in the church, had guided the Nicene council, had been a principal person in the appointment of canons, and was held in universal respect. Constantius and the whole Christian party were sensible of the importance of such a character. Flattery and menaces were both employed to prevail on him to condemn Athanasius. A few lines of his answer to an imperious letter of the emperor's may give us some idea of his spirit*: "I confessed the first time in the persecution under Maximian, your great-grandfather. If you likewise desire to persecute me, I am ready still to suffer any thing rather than betray the truth. It is not so much a personal malice against Athanasius, as the love of heresy which influences these men. I myself invited them to

* Athan. ad Solit.

come to me, and declare at the council of Sardica what they knew against him. They dared not ; they all refused. Athanasius came afterwards to your court at Antioch : he desired his enemies might be sent for, that they might make good their accusations. Why do you still hearken to them who refused such fair proposals ? How can you endure Ursatius and Valens, after they have recanted and acknowledged their calumny in writing ? Remember you are a mortal man ; be afraid of the day of judgment. God hath given you the empire, and hath committed the church to our care. I write thus through my concern for your eternal welfare ; but with respect to your requisition, I cannot agree with Arians, nor write against Athanasius. You act for his enemies, but in the day of judgment you must defend yourself alone." Constantius kept him a year at Sirmium, without respect to his age and infirmities. His orders addressed to the bishops were to condemn Athanasius, and to communicate with the Arians under pain of banishment. The judges were directed to see to the execution of these things. Ursatius and Valens, whose instability should have destroyed their credit, assisted the persecution by informations : zealous heretics by force of arms were intruded in the place of the exiled ; and Arianism seemed well nigh to have avenged the cause of fallen idolatry.

Athanasius
compelled
to leave
Alexandria.

The adventures of Athanasius himself in his sufferings were extraordinary. He was for some time preserved in the house of a pious woman with great care and fidelity. But we must not enlarge on the various hardships to which he was exposed : suffice it to mention some of the particular circumstances. Syrianus, a secular officer, came at night to his principal church at Alexandria, when the people were intent on their devotions. Numbers were murdered, others insulted and beaten. The intrepid prelate sat still in his chair, and directed the deacon

to sing the cxxxvith Psalm, the people answering, according to the custom of alternate singing, "For his mercy endureth for ever." Which being finished, he bade the people return to their houses. As the soldiers advanced toward him, his clergy and people begged him to depart, which he refused, thinking it his duty to stay till they had all left the church. He was in a manner forced out by the clergy and monks, and conveyed safe from the guards. An unavailing protest was made by the people against these violences.

The Pagans took courage, and assisted the heretics in the persecution, saying, the Arians have embraced our religion*. A bishop was found worthy to support these proceedings, George of Cappadocia, who began his usurpation in the year 356. Through his influence, supported by the secular arm, the friends of the Nicene faith were cruelly beaten, and some died under their anguish. A sub-deacon having been severely scourged, was sent to the mines, without being allowed time to dress his wounds, and he died on the road. Venerable, aged bishops were sent into the deserts throughout Egypt, and Arianism reigned and glutted itself in blood. The episcopal office was sold to unworthy men; the profession of Arianism being the only requisite for the office. The cruelties of George provoked the Alexandrians to retaliation, but military force prevailed; and after this bishop had been once expelled, he returned still more terrible and more detested.

George of Cappadocia chosen by the Arians to be bishop in the place of Athanasius,

A. D.
356.

So deplorably misinformed was Constantius, that in a letter to the people of Alexandria, he represents this same George as one who was very capable of instructing others in heavenly things. Athanasius having obtained a sight of this letter, was at length deterred from his intended journey to the emperor, and betook himself to the deserts, and visited the monks, his most faithful adherents, who refused to

* Athan. ad Solit.

discover him to his persecuting adversaries, and offered their throats to the sword, being ready to die for the Nicene faith. He filled up another part of his time in writing his own apology to Constantius. There are in it strong traces of that rapid eloquence and clear reasoning, for which this father is renowned. Integrity and fervour appear throughout; but it were to be wished, that less zeal on his own account, and more on account of his Divine Master, were visible in this as well as in his other writings. In truth, the connexion of the doctrine of the Trinity with the honour of Christ, and with lively faith in his mediation, is so plain, that practical, serious, humble religion, if it exist at all in any scene of controversy, must be found on that side. Men, who degrade the Divine Saviour into a creature, will of course exalt themselves, and cannot have that humility and faith which are the essential ingredients of a holy life. I gladly remind my readers, and myself, that the value of the apostolical doctrines, so fiercely persecuted in the fourth century, rests not on speculation, but on the holy tendency of their nature. There is sufficient proof of the existence of this holy tendency and influence, both in regard to Athanasius and other Trinitarians of that time; and there is also more than sufficient proof to the contrary tendency of the doctrines supported by the Arians. But it must be allowed that the evidence of the former sort is scanty: Christian godliness continued very low in all this period: and good men in their writings and reflections attended too little to the connexion which subsists between doctrine and practice.

Eusebius of Vercellæ, one of the most honest and pious bishops of those times, still suffered severely in Palestine in his banishment. The persecution reached even to Gaul, which had yet happily preserved the simplicity of apostolical confession unmolested. In Constantinople, Macedonius, by the terror of his persecutions, drove those of the general

church and the Novatian dissenters, into a sympathy for each other, which their mutual prejudices had long prevented. Both sorts suffered extremely, being obliged to communicate with Arians, or to undergo a variety of hardships. Agelius, the Novatian bishop, fled. A priest and a monk of theirs were tortured, and the latter died by this usage. Novatianism still retained a measure of the divine Spirit, and was honoured with furnishing those who suffered for Jesus. This* people had three churches in Constantinople, one of which was thrown down by the emperor's orders. The Novatians carried away the materials to the other side of the sea: the women and children wrought diligently, and thus it was rebuilt. In the next reign, by the emperor's permission, they carried back the materials, and rebuilt their church at Constantinople, and called it **ANASTATIA**†. An attempt was now made to reunite those of the general church with the Novatians: the former were the more ready, because they had no place of worship at all; but the narrow bigotry, which had ever been the great fault of Novatianism, prevented the union. But we must now mention a remarkable instance of human infirmity, which calls at once for compassion and for caution. Hosius had been a year confined at Sirmium, his relations were persecuted, and he suffered in his own person both scourges and tortures. By thus afflicting him, the Arian tyrant thought he served the cause; and by such inhuman measures were the patrons of the heresy stimulated to seek the destruction of Godliness! Yet so infatuated was the spirit of Constantius, that he all along was liberally supporting the most expensive forms and ornaments of Christian worship, while he was labouring with all his might to eradicate Christian doctrine. Hosius, above a hundred years old, submitted at length to subscribe an Arian creed, but the con-

Conduct of
the venerable
Hosius.

* Sozomen, B. IV. c. 20.

† That is, "risen again."

demnation of Athanasius he would not vindicate. Permitted at length to return into Spain, he lived, however, to retract, protesting against the violence with which he had been treated, and with his last breath exhorting all men to reject the heresy of Arius ; and thus we have seen to his end the most venerable character of that age, still in his heart true to his God. The length of his days only exposed him to a greater variety of suffering, and though Satan's malice was permitted to do him much mischief, he yet was enabled to die in peace, and to prove that the Lord faileth not them that are his.

Liberius of
Rome joins
the Arians,

A. D.

357.

In the same year, 357, Liberius of Rome, after two years exile, was not only prevailed on to receive an Arian creed, but even to reject Athanasius. The subscription to the creed was not so much an evidence of insincerity, as was the condemnation of the Alexandrian prelate, because the Arians, fertile in expedients, made creeds upon creeds, expressed in artful ambiguities, to impose on the unwary. Liberius by these unworthy means recovered his bishopric. The see of Rome at that time had secular charms sufficient to seduce a worldly mind. Whether Liberius cordially repented of his hypocrisy or not, we have no evidence. The cruelty of the Arians tried to the utmost the hearts of men in those days, and now the proverb was verified, "All the world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against all the world."

But the power of divine grace was displayed during this disastrous season in preserving a remnant, and particularly in strengthening the mind of that great man, through a long course of afflictions. He composed about this time a letter to the monks, in which he confesses the extreme difficulty of writing concerning the divinity of the Son of God, though it be easy to confute the heretics. He owns his ignorance, and calls himself a mere babbler, and beseeches the brethren to receive what he wrote, not as

a perfect explanation of the divinity of the Word, but as a confutation of the enemies of that doctrine.

Two councils were held, the one at Rimini, the other at Selucia, both with a view to support Arianism. In the former a number of good men were artfully seduced, by the snares of the Arians, to agree to what they did not understand. This sect, now victorious every where, began to show itself disunited, and to separate into two parties. But it is not worth while to trouble the reader with idle niceties, in which proud men involved themselves, while all had forsaken the simple faith of antiquity. In these confusions, Macedonius lost the see of Constantinople, which was given to Eudoxius, translated from Antioch, in the year 360. Constantius poorly endeavoured to atone for the corruptions both of principle and practice, with which he filled the church, by offering large vessels of gold and silver, carpets for the altar of gold tissue, adorned with precious stones, curtains of gold and divers colours for the doors of the church, and also liberal donations to the clergy, the virgins, and the widows*.

Eudoxius
is made
patriarch
of Constantinople,
A. D.
360.

In the meantime Christendom throughout groaned under the weight of extorted Arian subscriptions; and Macedonius, the deposed bishop of Constantinople, formed another sect of those who were enemies to the divinity of the Holy Ghost. These, by the advantage of sober manners, spread themselves among the monasteries, and increased the corruption which then pervaded the Christian world. But the vigilant spirit of Athanasius was stirred up to oppose this heresy also. "The Father cannot be Son, nor the Son Father, says he, and the Holy Ghost is never called by the name of Son, but is called the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. The holy Trinity is but one divine nature, and one God, with which a creature cannot be joined. This is sufficient for the faithful. Human knowledge goes

* Fleury, B. XIV. 33.

no farther : the cherubims veil the rest with their wings."

The see of Antioch being vacant, Meletius, bishop of Sebasta, a man of exemplary meekness and piety, was chosen. The Arians supposed him to be of their party. Constantius ordered the new bishop to preach before him on the controversial subject of the Trinity : Meletius delivered himself with Christian sincerity, rebuked the rashness of men, who strove to fathom the divine nature, and exhorted his audience to adhere to the simplicity of the faith. He had remained only a month in Antioch, and had the honour to be banished by the emperor, who filled up the see with Euzoius, the old friend of Arius. In consequence of this, the friends of Meletius separated from the Arians, and held their assemblies in the ancient church, which had been the first at Antioch. Besides the Arians, who were in possession of the emperor's favour, there were two parties both sound in the Nicene faith, the Eustathians, before spoken of, and the Meletians, who testified in the strongest manner their regard for their exiled pastor. In the year 361, however, Constantius died of a fever, having received baptism a little before he expired, from Euzoius ; for, after his father's example, he had deferred it till this time*. His character needs no detail : it appeared from his case, that a weak man, armed with despotic power, was capable of doing incredible mischief in the Church of Christ.

Constantius
dies,

A. D.
361.

* A fact related of him by Theodoret enables us to fix the religious character of this prince. When he was going to carry on war with Magnentius, he exhorted all his soldiers to receive baptism, observing the danger of dying without that sacred rite, and ordering those to return home who refused to submit to it. Not infidelity, but superstition, predominated in his mind. Yet how inconsistent, to defer his own baptism so long !

C H A P. V.

CENT.
IV.

A VIEW OF MONASTICISM AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY UNDER CONSTANTINE, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTIUS.

It seemed most convenient to preserve the connexion of the Arian controversy without interruption. If the evangelical reader has not gained much information concerning the spirit of true religion, during this violent contest, the times and the materials must bear the blame. There were probably, in that whole period, many sincere souls, who mourned in secret over the abominations of the age; but history, ever partial to the great, and dazzled with the splendor of kings and bishops, condescends not to notice them. The people of God were in lower life, and remain, therefore, unknown. We left Athanasius in the desert, where he employed the leisure, which the iniquity of the persecution gave him, in visiting the monks. He had been acquainted with their most renowned leader Anthony, but had not the satisfaction to meet with him again, he dying in the beginning of the year 356. Let us leave Athanasius and the Arian controversy awhile, and see what we can find concerning the monks, and other particulars of the dealings of God with his Church in the mean time.

Death of
Anthony
the Monk,
A. D.
356.

We are not to form an idea of ancient monks from modern ones. It was a mistaken thing in holy men of old to retire altogether from the world. But there is every reason to believe the mistake originated in piety. We often hear it said, how ridiculous to think of pleasing God by austerities and solitude! Far be it from me to vindicate the superstitions of monks, and particularly the vows of

celibacy. But the error is very natural, has been reprehended much too severely, and the profaneness of men of the world is abundantly more dangerous. The enormous evils of Monasticism are to be ascribed to its degeneracy in after-times, not to its first institution. What could for instance be better intentioned, than the determination of Anthony to follow literally our Lord's rule, "Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor?" Say that he was ignorant and superstitious; he was both: but he persevered to the age of a hundred and five years in voluntary poverty with admirable consistency. Surely it could be no slight cause that could move a young person of opulence to part with all, and live in the abstemiousness of a solitary life with such unshaken perseverance. Let us, from the memorials of his life, written by Athanasius, omitting the miracles which the then fashionable credulity imposed on men, endeavour to collect, as far as we can, a just idea of his spirit.

Athanasius tells us that he had often seen him, and had received information concerning him from his servant. It was a great disadvantage to Anthony's judgment, that he was unwilling to be instructed in literature. There is a medium in all things secular. We have seen numbers corrupted by an excess of literary attachments: we see here one misled by the want of proper cultivation. When a youth, he had heard read in the church our Lord's words to the rich young man, and his ignorance led him to sell all, and give to the poor, and enter into the monastic life. Monks, as yet, had not learned to live in perfect deserts unconnected with mankind, and hitherto they lived at a small distance from their own village. Anthony endeavoured to form himself on the severest models, and pushed the genius of solitude to rigours before unknown. His fame increased; he was looked on as a mirror of perfection, and the Egyptians were studious to follow his

example. His instructions to those who listened to him are not, in general, worth transcribing. The faith of Christ is very obscure, at least in the best of them; yet his sincerity is evident; his love to divine things must have been ardent; his conflicts and temptations, which are confusedly written by Athanasius, demonstrated a mind too humble, and knowing too much of himself, to trust in his own righteousness. He preached well by his life, and temper, and spirit, however he might fail in doctrinal knowledge.

In the persecution by Dioclesian he left his beloved solitude, and came to Alexandria, strengthening the minds of Christian sufferers, exposing himself to danger for the love of the brethren, and yet not guilty of the excess of delivering up himself to martyrdom. In all this there was what was better than the monk,—the sincere and charitable Christian. Nor did he observe to perfection the rules of solitude. There were two sorts of monks, the solitary, and those who lived in societies. Anthony, though he had a strong inclination to follow the first sort altogether, sometimes joined the latter, and even on some occasions appeared in the world.

The Arian heresy gave him another opportunity of showing his zeal. He again entered Alexandria, and protested against its impiety, which, he observed, was of a piece with heathenism itself. “Be assured,” said he, “all nature is moved with indignation against those who reckon the Creator of all things to be a creature.” And this is one circumstance, which convinces me, that genuine godliness, the offspring of Christian principles, must have been with the primitive monks, because they generally vindicated the Nicene faith, and could not endure Arianism. They must, many of them at least, have felt the motions of the divine life, which will not connect itself with any principles that depreciate the dignity of Jesus Christ.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH :

CHAP.
V.

In conversing with Pagan philosophers, he observed, that Christianity held the mystery, not in the wisdom of Grecian reasoning, but in the power of faith supplied to them from God by Jesus Christ. "Faith," says he, "springs from the affection of the mind ; Logic from artificial contrivance. Those who have the energy that is by faith, need not perhaps the demonstration that comes by reasoning." He very justly appealed to the glorious fruits of Christianity in the world, and exhorted the philosophers "to believe and know that the Christian art is not merely verbal, but of faith which worketh by love, with which ye being once endowed, shall not need demonstrations by arguments, but shall deem these words of Anthony sufficient to lead you to the faith of Christ."

The * evangelical reader will see here something better than mere monasticism. But he sullied all this by a foolish attempt, to make mankind believe, that he lived without food, while he ate in secret, and by a vain parade of conversation concerning temperance, which savoured more of Pythagorean fanaticism than of Christian piety. In his extreme old age he gave particular directions, that his body should be interred, not preserved in a house after the Egyptian manner of honouring deceased saints and martyrs, and charged his two attendants to let no man know the place of his burial. "At the resurrection of the dead I shall receive my body," says he, "from the Saviour incorruptible." He guarded his friends against the Arian heresy, and bade them not be disturbed, though the judicial power, an imaginary fading domination, should be against them. "Do ye observe what ye have received from the fathers, and particularly the pious faith in our Lord

* Possibly the attentive reader may observe, without my mentioning it, that I have seen, on a closer inspection, reason to think better of Anthony, than from the short account of him in Vol. I. pp. 524, 525, one might seem to conclude.

Jesus Christ, which ye have heard from the Scriptures, and of which I have often reminded you. Divide my clothes in this manner: Give one of my sheep-skins to the bishop Athanasius, together with the garment which I received from him when new, and now return him when old. And give the other sheep-skin to Serapion the bishop. The sackcloth keep for yourselves," says he to his two attendants. "Farewell, children, Anthony is going, and is no more with you." He stretched out his feet, and appearing pleased at the sight of his friends coming to him, he expired with evident marks of cheerfulness on his face. His last will was punctually executed. Such was the death of this father of monasticism: the account is taken wholly from his life by Athanasius, and is a monument of the genuine piety and deep superstition both of the monk and his biographer. Such was the state of godliness in those times, existing obscure in hermitages; while abroad in the world the Gospel was almost buried in faction and ambition; yet probably in ordinary life it thrived the best in some instances, though quite unknown.

By the assistance of Fleury, it would be easy to enlarge the history of men of this sort. There were others of great monastic renown in the time of Anthony. But their narratives, if true, are neither entertaining nor instructive, and a great part of them at least is stuffed with extravagant fables. Let us turn to other objects. At the time when the bishops were travelling to the council of Nice, Licinius, bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, in his way thither, arrived at a small town called Nazianzum in Cappadocia. There he met with Gregory, afterwards bishop of Nazianzum, who applied for baptism. This man had led a life of great moral strictness, belonging to a particular sect, who observed the Sabbath and a distinction of meats like the Jews. His wife Nonna was an exemplary Christian, and

was very instrumental in her husband's conversion. There is reason to hope it was a conversion from self-righteous pride to the humble faith of Jesus. Licinius instructed him: he received baptism, and some years afterwards, was made bishop of the place, and remained in that office forty-five years, to an extreme old age. Though advanced in years, when he applied himself to Christian learning, he acquired a just discernment, preserved his flock from the spreading infection of Arianism, and mollified the manners of the barbarous people. Possibly the memoirs of his pastoral labours, if we had them, might be found more instructive than most of the subjects which engage our attention in this period. Gregory's episcopal character commenced about the year 328. And this tribute seemed due to his memory and to that of his wife, not only on their own accounts, but also because they were the parents of the famous Gregory of Nazianzum, who in an oration celebrates their piety.

If we look to the situation of the ancient heretics, we find them in a dwindling state. The followers of Marcion, Valentinian, and the rest, still subsisted indeed, and an edict of Constantine forbade their assembling together. Under this act of Uniformity the Novatians were condemned also. Thus the best of the Dissenters were not permitted to worship in their own way, while the Donatists, the worst, were in a manner tolerated. But in vain do we look either for wisdom or equity in the ecclesiastical proceedings of Constantine or any of his family in general. Two only of the persecuted sects, the Meletians and the Donatists, were not mentioned in the edict, as far as one can judge, and, in consequence of this omission, they subsisted, and weathered the force of the decree. The old heresies were crushed, while the enthusiastic Montanists maintained their hold in their native Phrygia, and the Novatians remained still numerous, retaining narrow views of

church discipline, and with these a considerable strictness of manners, and it is hoped, the good influence of the Divine Spirit. But we want better materials for the history of this people.

At the very time, when Athanasius was persecuted at Tyre, and was thought unworthy to live at Alexandria, the bishops were employed also in dedicating the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Its magnificence was a monument of the ostentatious superstition of Constantine. It is foreign to our design to describe its expensive pomp. On this occasion, Jerusalem, which from the time of Adrian had been called in *Ælia**, recovered its name, became the resort of Christian pilgrims, was vainly represented † by some as the new Jerusalem described by the prophets, and was held in great veneration by sermons, acts of liberality, and panegyrics on the emperor. In these things the historian Eusebius was signally distinguished. Here Arius was received; and thus that Scripture was fulfilled concerning the hypocrisy of professors of religion in the Christian times, “Your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name’s sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified ‡.” The enmity against real godliness was varnished with a parade of external piety; pomp supplied the room of sincerity, and formality usurped the place of spiritual understanding.

Not long before his death, Constantine wrote to Anthony the monk, and begged an answer. The reflection which he made on the occasion showed at once his ignorance of secular affairs, and his knowledge of divine things. Be not astonished, says he, if an emperor writes to us. He is but a man: rather be astonished, that God should write a book for man, and deliver it to us by his own Son. He answered the emperor, desiring him not to esteem present things, to think of the future judgment, to

* *Ælia Capitolina*, because rebuilt by *Ælius Adrianus*.

† Fleury, B. XI. 54.

‡ Isaiah, lxvi. 5.

remember that Jesus Christ is the true and eternal king; to be merciful, to do justice, and particularly to take care of the poor.

Under Constantius an attempt was made to reunite the Donatists to the general church. The consequence was, that a number were formally recovered to it. The body of them remained, what they always were, an unworthy people, and they had among them a sort of wild licentious persons called Circumcelliones, who were very violent and ferocious in their conduct.

CH A P. VI.

THE EXTENSION OF THE GOSPEL, FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTIUS.

THIS should be the favourite object of a Christian historian, and glad should I be to answer the most sanguine wishes of the evangelical reader. But the period before us is far more fruitful in ecclesiastical contentions than remarkable for the extension of Christianity itself; and even the account which we have of the trophies of the Redeemer's death and resurrection, in the barbarous countries, is too mean and defective, to satisfy the laudable curiosity of those who love the progress of vital religion.

About the beginning of the century, a Tyrian philosopher, named Meropius, possessed of the spirit of travelling, explored the interior parts of India*. He took with him two boys, his relations, who understood the Greek tongue. Arriving at a certain

* I follow the narrative of Socrates, B. I. c. 19. But what he calls India, seems to have been the kingdom of Abyssinia, which at this day calls itself Christian, and glories in the evangelical labours of its first bishop Frumentius; though it appears, from the account of Bruce, in his voyage to discover the source of the Nile, to have long remained in the deepest ignorance and vice.

harbour, the natives murdered the whole company, except the two boys, who were presented to the king, and finding favour in his eyes, were promoted in his court. Upon the king's death, the queen dowager engaged them to superintend the affairs of the realm, and the education of the young prince. Their names were Ædesius and Frumentius. But the latter was prime minister*. The man, however, had his eyes fixed on higher objects than the politics of the country. He met with some Roman merchants, who traded there, and asked them if they found any Christians in the kingdom. Having discovered some by their means, he encouraged them to associate for the purposes of religious worship, and at length erected a church for their use, and certain natives, instructed in the Gospel, were converted to the faith. On the king's accession to the administration, Frumentius desired leave to return to his own country, which both the king and his mother were very reluctant to allow. He left the country, however, with Ædesius. The latter returned to his relations at Tyre, while Frumentius, arriving at Alexandria, communicated his adventures to Athanasius the bishop, and informed him of the probability of evangelizing the country, if missionaries were sent thither. On mature consideration, Athanasius told him, that none was so fit for the office as himself. He consecrated him therefore the first bishop of the Indians; and this active missionary, returning to a country where his integrity and capacity had already been distinguished, preached the Gospel with much success, and erected many churches. Thus was the Gospel planted in a barbarous kingdom, where the extreme ignorance of the natives would much facilitate its external progress at least, under the

* Bruce would call him the Ras. The whole story carries a strong air of probability, from the resemblance of the customs in this Indian kingdom to those of Abyssinia; which seems to confirm the conjecture, that the India of Socrates was Abyssinia.

episcopal labours of a man, who had educated their sovereign; then at least, most probably, there were many real conversions, and a time of copious effusion of the Spirit of God*. And the difficulty of access to this region, which has since proved so prejudicial to the advancement of knowledge among its inhabitants, was at that time a happy preservative to the infant church. It was in vain, that Constantius laboured to poison it with his beloved Arianism. He gave orders that Frumentius should be deposed, and that an Arian successor should be appointed; but the country was happily out of the reach of his imperial bigotry.

The Iberians were a people bordering on the Black Sea, who, in some military excursion, took prisoner a pious Christian woman, whose sanctity of manners engaged the respect of these barbarians. Socrates mentions several miracles which God wrought by her means†. The credibility of such divine interpositions much depends on the importance of circumstances. ‘*Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus,*’ is a rule of Horace full of good sense, and as applicable to theology as to poetry. What so likely to affect the minds of an ignorant people as miracles? The situation of things rendered it probable, that such divine interpositions might take place; but I shall mention only those, which may seem worthy of some credit. A child of the king’s was sent to the women of the country to be cured, if any of them knew a proper method of treating it—a well-known ancient custom. The case baffled the skill of them all, and the child was committed to the captive woman. “Christ, said she, who healed

* The absolute despotism of the Abyssinian princes, and the probability that the Sovereign before us received Christianity, would account for the establishment of the Gospel through the whole country. And the inaccessible situation and profound ignorance of Abyssinia, will account for the continuance of nominal Christianity to this day.

† B. I. c. 20.

many, will also heal this infant." She prayed, and he recovered. In the same manner the queen herself was healed of a distemper some time after. "It is not my work, said she, but that of Christ the Son of God, the maker of the world." The king sent her presents in token of his gratitude. But she sent them back, assuring him, that "godliness was her riches, and that she should look on it, as the noblest present, if he would worship the God whom she adored." The next day the king was lost in hunting in a thick mist, and implored in vain the aid of his gods. In his distress, recollecting the words of the woman, he prayed to the God whom she worshipped. The mist was instantly dispersed, and the king found his way home. In consequence of this event, and of future conferences with the woman, both the king and queen embraced the Gospel, and exhorted their subjects to receive it. An embassy was sent to Constantine to desire that pastors might be commissioned to instruct them. The emperor gave the ambassadors a very gracious reception.

It is proper to add here, on the authority of Philostorgius, that Constantius sent ambassadors to the Sabeans of Arabia Felix, demanding that the Roman navigators and inhabitants might build Christian churches, and that he furnished them with money for the purpose. Theophilus, an Indian, who had long been with Constantine in the capacity of an hostage, was ordained bishop by Eusebius of Nicomedia, and sent among the Sabeans; he erected churches, and spread at least the name of Christianity to a certain degree.

The ecclesiastical accounts of Britain are so fabulous, or at best so scanty, that it is a pleasure to be able to relate any thing that has the marks of historical authenticity. At the council of Ariminum, held on account of the Arian heresy, the emperor Constantius gave orders to supply the expenses of the bishops out of the public treasury.

While the rest accepted the imperial munificence, the bishops of Gaul and Britain thought it unbecoming the ecclesiastical character to receive secular maintenance, and bore their own expenses. Only three from Britain were so poor, that they were unable to maintain themselves. Their brethren offered by a contribution to supply their wants; but they chose rather to be obliged to the emperor's bounty, than to burthen their brethren. Gavidius, a French bishop, reproached them for this; but Severus, the relater of the story, thinks it was a circumstance much redounding to their credit*. So I apprehend it will appear to the reader, and we regret that where there are such evident vestiges of primitive and disinterested simplicity, we should know so little of the lives and characters of men quite remote from the scenes of ecclesiastical turbulence and ambition. Probably in our island the Gospel flourished at this time in humble obscurity.

Christianity was spreading itself beyond the Roman empire. The nations bordering on the Rhine, with the remotest parts of France, were now Christian; and the Goths near the Danube, about sixty years before, had been civilized at least, by the Christian religion, through the bishops whom they had carried captive under Gallienus; and most probably the Spirit of God was with their labours. Armenia under its king Tiridates had embraced Christianity†, and by means of commerce had conveyed it into Persia, where Christians began to be numerous.

But there they sustained a very grievous persecution

* Sulpit. Sev. B. II. c. 55.

† Armenia had probably long before been in some measure evangelized. It was not, however, till the commencement of this century that Gregory, surnamed The Enlightener, established the Gospel there. Through his means Tiridates and all his nobles were brought over to the profession of Christianity. He was consecrated bishop of Armenia by Leontius bishop of Capadocia. Mosheim, Cent. IV.

from king Sapor, in the time of Constantine; a long account of which we have in Sozomen*. The reader has seen many things of the same kind in former persecutions; I shall only observe therefore in general, that thousands chose rather to suffer for the name of Christ, than to pollute themselves with the worship of the sun; that the Magi and the Jews were peculiarly instrumental in this persecution; and that the people of God suffered here with so much sincerity and fortitude, as to evince that the Lord had many people belonging to himself in Persia.

CHAP. VII.

THE DECLINE OF IDOLATRY IN THIS CENTURY, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTIUS.

It was the character of the ancient Romans to be excessively superstitious. While their arms prospered through Europe and Asia, they were vigilant and punctual in all the offices of their religion, and studious of adopting the gods of the nations whom they conquered, as well as their improvements in arts and sciences. This religious spirit was the nurse at least, if not the parent, of many social virtues; industry, frugality, valour, and patriotism, coalesced with superstition. With the learning of Greece, at length, her philosophical scepticism and Epicurean profaneness were incorporated into the Roman commonwealth, and were attended with their usual vices of luxury and dissipation. The vulgar still believed, as senators and equestrians were wont to do; the college of Augurs, the whole apparatus of idolatry, remained in all their pomp and formality; and the greatest noblemen thought themselves dignified

* B. II. c. 9, &c.

by the priesthood, while they inwardly despised what they professed with fictitious reverence.

Little did they think, when a few fishermen and mechanics of Judea began to preach Christ crucified, that the Christian religion was destined to overturn the idolatrous establishment of ages. By our present familiarity with Christian usages, and by the perfect annihilation of Pagan phenomena, we are not prepared to admire so much the work of God in the propagation of his own religion, as it deserves. Were the matter fully considered, it would strike every mind with conviction, that the hand of the Lord hath done this. That zeal, which philosophy had cooled, revived in the minds of polytheists, and produced persecution, as Christianity spread through the nations. A superstitious temper in many of the great and the learned succeeded to the sceptical turn of mind, and mere philosophers themselves, through carnal enmity and political selfishness, aided the intolerant spirit with all their might. We have seen how the Gospel still triumphed without secular support, and have already taken notice of one strong symptom of the decline of Paganism toward the end of the second century, namely, that a new race of philosophers arose, who attempted to form an alliance with Christianity. These new Platonics all owned Ammonius for their master, who, as Eusebius tells us, professed the Gospel to the end of his life. So plainly did Satan feel his inability to crush the Gospel, that he was contented now with labouring to adulterate and undermine it. From this school proceeded Porphyry*, born at Tyre, whose life is written by Eunapius. He studied six years at Rome under Plotinus, whose life he published. Socrates tells us†, that in his early days he was a

The
Platonic
School of
Ammonius.

* See Lardner's Collection, under the article Porphyry. From him I have derived information on this subject, though obliged to dissent entirely from his opinion.

† B. III. c. 23.

Christian ; but having been beaten by some Christians at Cæsarea, through disgust he relinquished the Gospel. Its hold on his mind must have been extremely weak, when he could be induced to leave it because of the unworthy conduct of some nominal believers. But let Augustine's reflection be heard on this occasion, who thus addresses him : " If ever you had truly and cordially loved divine wisdom, you would have known Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God ; nor would you ever have revolted from his most wholesome humility, through the pride of vain knowledge." There remain only some fragments of his fifteen books against the Christians. He shows in them the same malignant spirit which Celsus did, but with superior abilities ; for his capacity and learning were both very eminent.

In his old age he published a work on the Philosophy of Oracles, which has been denied to be his, because he speaks in it very honourably of Christianity, and utters sentiments which one would not expect from a man who had spent a long life in virulent animosity against the followers of Jesus. This enmity is often as strong where it is covered, as when it is open ; and circumstances will dictate a great variety in men's ways of showing or concealing it. During the Dioclesian persecution, philosophers were not ashamed to persecute. Hierocles has been mentioned, who as a magistrate tortured the Christians, and as a philosopher wrote against them. If he lived to see Christianity established under Constantine, it is not improbable, provided he wrote at all on the subject, that he wrote as Porphyry does in the work before us. Worldly men are moved by good success to admire, by bad to condemn. Even their opinions are superficially swayed by these external things, and yet the latent frame of their spirits remains the same. Porphyry lived, we are told, to an advanced age ; and as his work, styled the Philosophy of Oracles, points out the Gospel to be

then the prevalent religion, it was probably his last production ; and Eunapius owns he left sentiments in his last works different from the former. Yet he never seems with Ammonius to have professed Christianity since his early apostacy. But he confesses that the Barbarians were much in the right, and the Greeks in the wrong. He tells us of Apollo's oracular answers concerning Christ, that his soul after death was immortal, that he was pious and holy, though ignorant Christians do wrong to worship him. Augustine thinks*, that these oracles were invented on purpose to disparage the Christians, by representing them as being allied with Satan. The oracle, whether carried on by Satanic or human fraud, or what seems nearest the truth, by both, would doubtless have a tendency by this means to asperse Christianity. At the same time to praise Christ and to blame his followers, may be conceived to be the natural language of an enemy of God, lying under some restraint ; and it has been the common conduct of infidels in our days, who, had they lived in persecuting times, with Celsus would have as freely expressed their contempt of Christ as of his people. Christians are, however, represented by Porphyry as corrupt and erroneous, while their master is honoured as divine. From this view of Porphyry, one may learn something of the policy of Satan and his emissaries in the support of a dying cause. The decay of Paganism is evident, and the arts of philosophic infidelity were then what they are now. Men who know the value of divine truth should guard against these devices, and not suffer themselves to be seduced by an ambiguous and insidious candour. At the same time the progress of error in proud men is strongly illustrated in the case of Porphyry. Men, who have no real experience of the power of godliness, are easily induced to give up its form : if they be men

* Civit. Dei. B. XIX.

of parts and learning, they are led from one delusion to another, till they advance to the farthest limit of malevolence and enmity. Checked they may be by circumstances, and may talk respectfully of Christ to the last ; but unless humbled and brought to know themselves, they will live and die the same.

The first measures of Constantine, after his success in Italy, were to place Christianity on an equal footing with Paganism by the laws, while he gradually patronized the church more and more. Among other improvements in the political and judiciary state of the empire, he abolished the barbarous punishment of crucifixion. After he was become sole master of the empire, he forbade the private exercise of divination, the great bulwark of false religion, still allowing the public use of it at the altars and temples ; and some time after he prohibited the worst branches of sorcery and magic *. He took particular care to secure the observation of the Lord's day, and ordered it to be set apart for prayer and holy exercises. He openly declared, that he would not oblige men to be Christians, though he earnestly desired they would become so ; nor did he abolish the rites of the temples. Finding, however, the Pagans extremely obstinate in the preservation of their superstitions, he publicly exposed the mysteries which had hitherto been kept secret, melted down golden statues, and caused brazen ones to be drawn by ropes through the streets of Constantinople. And some of the temples which had been scenes of horrible wickedness, he destroyed.

Policy of
Constantine.

In Egypt, the famous cubit, with which the priests were wont to measure the height of the Nile, was kept in the temple of Serapis. This by Constantine's order was removed to the church at Alexandria. The Pagans beheld the removal with indignation, and ventured to predict, that the Nile would no longer overflow its banks. Divine Providence,

* Cave's State of Paganism under the first Christian Emperors.

however, favoured the schemes of Constantine, and the Nile the next year overflowed the country in an uncommon degree. In this gradual manner was Paganism overturned; sacrifices in a partial manner still continued, but the entire destruction of idolatry seemed to be at hand. The temples stood for the most part, though much defaced and deprived of their former dignity and importance. The sons of Constantine trode in his steps, and gradually proceeded in the demolition of Paganism. Under them we find an express edict for the abolition of sacrifices.

Magnentius, the usurper, while master of Rome, allowed the Gentiles to celebrate their sacrifices in the night; but Constantius immediately after his victory took away this indulgence, and solemnly prohibited magic in all its various forms. He also took away the altar and image of Victory, which stood in the portico of the capital. In truth, this emperor was by no means wanting in zeal against idolatry, though his unhappy controversial spirit in defence of Arianism rendered him rather an enemy than a friend to vital godliness.

Such was the state of Paganism at the death of Constantius. Pagans were, however, exceedingly numerous, and enjoyed with silent pleasure the long and shameful scenes of Arian controversy in the church. Nor were they hopeless. The eyes of the votaries of the gods were all directed to his successor, the warlike, the enterprising, the zealous Julian, a determined foe of the Gospel. Great things had been done for the church; but its rulers of the house of Constantine were weak, and void of true piety. In the warm imaginations of many zealous devotees, even Jupiter himself seemed likely TO GROW TERRIBLE AGAIN, AND TO BE AGAIN ADORED. This last struggle of expiring Paganism, marked as it is with signal instances of Providence, will deserve particular attention.

CHAP. VIII.

JULIAN'S ATTEMPTS TO RESTORE IDOLATRY.

A GREATER zealot for Paganism than Julian, is not to be found in the history of mankind. Temper, talents, power, and resentment, all conspired to cherish his superstitious attachments. It may serve to illustrate the providential care of God over his church, and by way of contrast it may heighten our ideas of that Gospel simplicity, with which we have seen divine truth to be supported and advanced, to behold the serpentine arts with which the prince of darkness was permitted to attempt the restoration of his kingdom by the hand of Julian. For I can by no means subscribe to the character, which Mosheim * gives us of the mediocrity of his genius. Whoever duly attends to the plan which he formed to subvert Christianity, will see the union of a solid judgment with indefatigable assiduity. Neither address nor dexterity was wanted. All that the wit and prudence of man could do was attempted. He was highly superstitious indeed, and addicted to magic beyond all bounds. Nor are these, as Mosheim thinks, any tokens of natural meanness of spirit. Alexander the Great was as magnanimous by nature as any of the sons of men; yet was he as superstitious as Julian himself. The desire of weighing characters in modern scales, is apt to betray men of learning into a false judgment both of persons and things. Let it then fairly be allowed, what indeed his works and actions in general, as well as his artful and judicious opposition to the Gospel, evince, that Julian was a man of very great parts and endowments. He died about the same age with Alexander: neither of them had attained that maturity of judgment, which full experience gives to the human mind. And yet in them both the world beheld

* Mosh. Ecclesiast. Cent. iv.

uncommon exertions of genius and capacity. If Julian failed, let it be remembered, that his arms were levelled against Heaven ; and it is of no service to Christianity, to depreciate the talents of its enemies.

Constantius ought to have reflected, that by cruelty and injustice in sacrificing the relations of Julian, he excited his hatred against Christianity. The case of Julian deserves commiseration, though it cannot admit of apology. What had he seen excellent or comely in the effects of the Gospel on his uncle or cousins? What a prospect did he behold in the face of the Christian church, torn with factions, and deformed by ambition ! The same vices under which the heathen world groaned, appeared but too visible at present among Christians. These things, joined with the resentment of family wrongs, determined him early in life in favour of the old religion. He was made a public reader in the church of Nicomedia, and affected a zeal for Christianity during the greatest part of the reign of Constantius. Had he read the New Testament with attention, and prayed over it with seriousness, he might have seen that the doctrines there inculcated led to a conduct very opposite to that which he beheld in the then leaders of the Christian world, both civil and ecclesiastical. A tenth part of the study, which he employed on the profane classics, might have sufficed for this. But like many infidels in all ages, he does not seem to have paid any attention to the Scriptures, nor even to have known what their doctrines really are. From his youth he practised dissimulation with consummate artifice. One Maximus, a noted philosopher and magician, confirmed him in his pagan views ; he secretly held correspondence with Libanius, the pagan sophist ; and openly attempted to erect a church ; he studied all day, and sacrificed at night. He offered up his prayers in the church in public, and at midnight rose to perform his devotions to Mercury. His residence at Athens completed his knowledge of the fashionable philosophy ;

in fine, no person was ever more admirably qualified to act the part which he did, when he succeeded Constantius.

CHRY.
IV.

This happened in the year 361. He ordered the temples to be set open, those that were decayed to be repaired, and new ones to be built, where there was a necessity. He fined the persons who had made use of the materials of the temples which had been demolished, and set apart the money, this way collected, for the erection of new ones. Altars were every where set up, and the whole machinery of Paganism was again brought into use. Altars and fires, blood, perfumes, and priests attending their sacrifices, were every where visible, and the imperial palace itself had its temple and furniture. The first thing he did every morning was to sacrifice, and by his presence and example he encouraged the practice among all his subjects. Heathenism held up its head, and Christians were every where insulted. He repealed the laws made against idolatry, and confirmed its ancient honours and privileges. But laws are the least part of what it behoves princes to do, who mean to encourage religion. A plan of conduct, an earnestness of principle, and a system of manners, are needful to support any religious tenets*. The Author, mentioned below, has with great clearness illustrated the methods of Julian. Change the object, and let true religion be promoted, instead of false, and Julian will preach usefully to Christian princes, and shame the criminal indifference to all piety, which clouds the greatest part of the political hemisphere of Europe.

Julian succeeds Constantius,

A. D.
361.

I. Philosophical infidels, in our own times, when they have found themselves no longer able to support a perfect scepticism, have borrowed some Christian light, called it natural, and laboured by

Julian's political measures.

* Cave's State of Paganism under Julian. This writer has given so clear and masterly a view, in eight particulars, of Julian's attempts, that I cannot do better than to tread in his steps. I shall avail myself, however, of other helps, still further to illustrate the subject, particularly Julian's own writings.

the help of that to subvert Christianity itself. We have seen, in part, the same procedure in the Ammonian philosophers. In Julian this scheme was reduced to a system ; and he issued out precepts for the support of Heathenism, which in his youth he had learned in the Christian school, though he disavows his obligations to his benefactors. The divine excellence of the Gospel, and the extreme malignity of human nature, do each appear hence in a very conspicuous light. To reform Paganism itself was his first object ; to maintain it on the old system of popular belief he saw was impossible. Christian light had now rendered pagan darkness visible, its deformity disgusting, and its absurdity contemptible. With great importunity did he exhort magistrates to correct the vices of men, and relieve their miseries, assuring them that the gods would reward men for their charitable acts ; that it is our duty to do good to all, even to the worst of men and our bitterest enemies ; and that public religion should be supported by a reverential adoration of the images of the gods, which were to be looked on as symbols of the gods themselves. Priests, he said, should so live, as to be copies of what they preached by their own lives, and dissolute ones should be expelled from their offices. Not only wicked actions, but obscene and indecent language should be avoided by them. No idle books and wanton plays, but divine philosophy, should be the object of their serious study ; they should learn sacred hymns by heart, should pray thrice or at least twice every day ; and when in their turn called on to attend the temple, they should never depart from it, but give up themselves to their office. At other times they should not frequent the forum, nor approach the houses of the great, unless with a view of procuring relief for the indigent, or discharging the duties of their office ; that in no case they should frequent the theatres, nor ever be seen in the company of a charioteer, player, or dancer. In every city the most

pious and virtuous should be ordained, without any consideration of their circumstances. The godly training of their own families, and their compassionate care for the indigent, would be their best recommendation. The impious Galileans, he observed, by their singular benevolence had strengthened their party, and Heathenism had suffered by the want of attention to these things.

Such was the fire which the apostate stole from heaven, and such his artifice in managing it! The rules, however, deserve the attention of Christian pastors in all ages, though it may seem wonderful that the Roman high priest* should not see the divinity of that religion whence he had learned such excellent things, the like to which are not in any degree to be found in Plato or any other of his favourite Greeks. He endeavoured, in imitation of Christians, also to erect schools for the education of youth. Lectures of religion, stated times of prayers, monasteries for devout persons, hospitals and almshouses for the poor and diseased and for strangers; these things he particularly recommends in a letter to Arsacius the chief priest of Galacia. He tells him what it was that advanced the impious religion of the Christians, their kindness to strangers, their care in burying the dead, and their affected gravity. He bids him warn the priests to avoid play-houses and taverns, and sordid employments. Hospitals should be erected in every city for the reception of all sorts of indigent persons. The Galileans, he observes, relieve both their own poor and ours†.

It was not, however, in Julian's power to infuse that spirit into his partisans, which alone could produce such excellent fruits. It is vain to think of destroying Christian principles, and at the same time

* All the Cæsars were intitled Pontifex Maximus.

• † In the same spirit, speaking of the duties of a priest, he observes, "that the gods have given us great hopes after death, and on them we may with confidence rely." He certainly learnt this language from Christianity, which he ungratefully labours to destroy. A species of behaviour not uncommon with philosophic infidels.

preserving Christian practice. But here is an additional testimony to the virtues of Christians from their most determined enemy, and as powerful an illustration of the work of God in the first ages of Christianity. It must be confessed, at the same time, that the good sense and penetration of the emperor, are as conspicuous as his malice and impiety.

II. Ridicule was the next weapon which the apostate made use of against Christianity. It is a method of attack which in all ages has been but too successful. Satire, as it is the easiest, so is it the most pleasing mode of writing; the whole nature of man, prone to indulge ideas of evil, favours the practice, and when written by an emperor, who might, if he had pleased, have used violence of the most formidable kind, it seemed to be the dictate of generosity. In writing against Christianity, he trode in the steps of Celsus and Porphyry, and, by the few fragments of his work which remain, appears to have imbibed their spirit. The son of Mary, or the Galilean, were the titles which he gave to the blessed Jesus, and he ordered Christians to be called Galileans.

In his treatise of the Cæsars, he asperses his uncle the great Constantine with much severity, and represents the Gospel as an asylum for the vilest of mankind. No doubt the enemies of God were delighted in that age with such productions, as they have since been with similar ones of Hume and Voltaire : and many are slow to learn, that a serious frame of mind is absolutely necessary for the contemplation of Christianity, and is as favourable for its reception, as a playful spirit is for its exclusion from the mind of man.

III. He was extremely politic in weakening the power and interest of Christians. He made an act of sacrifice the condition of preserving their places of honour and authority, and thus he either lessened their power or their reputation, and while he carefully avoided a formal persecution, he indirectly persecuted under every plausible pretence he could

invent. Whoever had distinguished himself, under the former reigns, in demolishing the monuments of idolatry, felt his heavy hand, and was even put to death on frivolous accusations. The grants made to some subjects from the revenues of heathen temples, furnished a decent opportunity of impoverishing the opulent Christians, and this often with extreme injustice. He seized the treasures of the Arian church at Edessa, which had assaulted the Valentinian heretics, taunting them with the law of their religion, that being made poor here they might be rich hereafter. Injuries were now committed with impunity against the Christians by the governors of provinces, and when the former complained, he had the baseness to turn the knowledge of Christian precepts, which he had imbibed in his tender years, into a cruel sarcasm: "You know what directions of passiveness under injuries your Christ has given you!" To this he added an affected encouragement of heretics and sectaries, and thus artfully embroiled the Christian world with factions by toleration of them all, without real affection for any.

IV. It was, however, a refinement of policy far beyond the maxims of that age, and a proof of the native sagacity and good sense of Julian, that, young and impetuous as he was, he could abstain from open persecution himself, and yet connive at it in others, who knew what was agreeable to their master. He boasted of mildness in this respect, and contrasted himself with Galerius and the rest of the persecutors, observing, that they had augmented, rather than lessened the number of Christians. For, give them only occasion, said he, and they will crowd as fast to martyrdom as bees fly to their hives. Yet a number suffered for the Gospel under his reign, though not by the forms of avowed persecution.

V. The bishops and inferior clergy were beheld with an eye of rancour, at once ingenious and determined. In truth, they are in all ages the object of peculiar malevolence to men who love darkness

rather than light. Persecuting emperors and atheistical philosophers unite in this respect. It is the glory of the Christian religion, that it provides popular instruction for the bulk of mankind, where not applause, but spiritual utility, not ostentation, but holy and virtuous principles and practice, are the object of attention. Persecutors desire, that no instruction be instilled into the minds of the people, and philosophers, overlooking the vulgar with proud disdain, confine their attention to a few learned men. If the Gospel be indeed the light of heaven, that alone leads men to holiness, which fallen nature abhors, one sees at once, why the public teachers of Christianity are abhorred by the proud and the mighty. Julian charged them with seditiousness; had he been a citizen of a free state, he would, with equal falsehood and with equal malice, have charged them with supporting tyranny. To deprive the church of the inspection of its pastors, he seized their incomes, abrogated their immunities, exposed them to civil burdens and offices, and occasionally expelled them by fraud or violence. At Antioch the treasures of the church were seized, the clergy obliged to flee, and the churches shut up*. The same was done at Cyzicus without any shadow of sedition. At Bostra he threatened Titus the bishop, that if any mutiny happened, he should lay the blame on him and his clergy; and when the bishop

* It is certain that the temple of Daphne was burned in the night which terminated the procession of the Christians, who had removed the body of Babylas, a martyr in the Decian persecution, to Antioch from Daphne, where Julian would not suffer it to remain any longer. Julian, in his satire against the people of Antioch, indirectly charged the Christians with the fact, and was glad of the pretence to justify his severities against them. That he suspected them, Ammianus assures us, but gives no grounds to justify the suspicion. The work, intitled *Misopogon*, rallies the manners of the Antiochians. Those of the emperor were austere, and void not only of pomp, but even of decent neatness. Theirs were full of Asiatic luxury: In fact, Christian simplicity had much decayed in this place, where Christians first had the name. Their numbers were immense, but the power of godliness was low.

assured him, that though the inhabitants were chiefly Christian, they lived peaceably and quietly under his government, he wrote back to the city, charging him with calumniating their character, and exhorting them to expel him. In other places he found pretences for imprisoning and torturing the pastors.

VI. The vigilant malice of the apostate surveyed every advantage, and seized it with consummate dexterity. Nor can the enemies of the Gospel in any age find a school more fruitful in the lessons of persecution than this before us. A man so perfectly Grecian as this emperor, must have hated or despised the Jews, and Moses must have been as really an object of his derision, as St. Paul. But to advance and encourage the Jews in their secular concerns, was one of the obvious means of depreciating Christianity. Hence he spake of them with compassion, begged their prayers for his success in the Persian wars, and pressed them to rebuild their temple*, and restore their worship. He himself promised to defray the expense out of the exchequer, and appointed an officer to superintend the work. To strengthen the hands of such determined enemies of Christianity, and to invalidate the Christian prophecies concerning the desolation of the Jews †, were objects highly desirable indeed to the mind of Julian. But the enterprize was suddenly baffled, and the workmen were obliged to desist. No historical facts since the days of the Apostles seems better attested.

* He sent for some of the chief men of their nation, and asked them why they did not sacrifice according to the law of Moses. They told him, that they were forbidden to sacrifice except at Jerusalem. He thereupon promises to rebuild their temple; and we have still a letter of his to the community of the Jews, which appears, on the authority of Sozomen, to be genuine. Philostorgius expressly tells us, that Julian's design in the re-building of Jerusalem was to oppose the prophecies. Sozomen.—Lardner.

† See Matt. xxiii. 38, 39. To restore this people, while yet they continued in their enmity to Christ, was an attempt worthy of an infidel like Julian, and called for a miraculous interposition as plainly as Pharaoh's pursuit of the Israelites at the Red Sea.

I shall state very briefly the fact itself and its proofs, and then leave the reader to judge, whether there was ever any reason to doubt its credibility.

Ammianus Marcellinus, a writer of unquestionable credibility, and at least no friend of the Gospel, acquaints us with the attempt, and informs us of its defeat. "He projected to rebuild the magnificent temple of Jerusalem. He committed the conduct of the affair to Alypius of Antioch ; who set himself to the vigorous execution of his charge, and was assisted by the governor of the province ; but horrible balls of fire breaking out near the foundations with repeated attacks, rendered the place inaccessible to the scorched workmen from time to time, and the element resolutely driving them to a distance, the enterprize was dropped*." Socrates observes, that during the progress of this affair the Jews menaced the Christians, and threatened to retort upon them the evils which they had suffered from the Romans. The Christian evidences for the fact are Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, who lived at the same time. The three ecclesiastical historians, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, who lived in the next age, do all give a testimony consistent one with another. To these may be added, Philostorgius the Arian, and the testimony of Jewish rabbis. See Warburton's Julian, p. 98.

VII. The suppression of learning among the Christians was another of the objects of Julian's policy. He published a law, that no professor of any art or science should practise in any place without the approbation of the court of that city, and the sanction of the emperor. With a view to keep the church in ignorance of the arts of reasoning and philosophy, he forbid Christian schoolmasters to teach Gentile learning, lest being furnished, says he, with our armour, they make war upon us with our own weapons. Our learning is unnecessary to Christians, who are trained up to an illiterate rusti-

* Ammianus, B. XXIII. c. 1.

city, so that to believe is sufficient for them ; and by this prohibition I only restore possessions to their proper owners *. The scheme was highly prudent, but it required a great length of time, to raise from it any considerable effects.

VIII. Philosophy had ever been the determined foe of the Gospel. It behoved the artful persecutor, himself a philosopher, to encourage it as much as possible. He expressed his hearty wishes, that all the books of the wicked Galileans were banished out of the world. But as this was now impossible, he directed the philosophers to bend all their powers against them. Jamblicus, Libanius, Maximus, and others of the philosophic tribe, were his intimate friends and counsellors, and the empire was filled with invectives against the Gospel. Its enemies were liberally paid by imperial munificence for their labours, and Julian seemed desirous to put it to the proof, whether indeed "the foolishness of God was wiser than men."

IX. He used ensnaring artifices to draw unwary Christians into compliance with pagan superstitions. He was wont to place the images of the heathen gods near his own statues, that those who bowed to the latter, might seem to adore also the former. Those who seemed thus to comply, he endeavoured

* In the same strain, he says "If they (the Christian professors) think these authors give a false account of the most honourable things, let them betake themselves to the churches of the Galileans, and expound Matthew and Luke. Yet those of the (Christian) youth who please to go (to the Pagan schools) are not excluded." So prudently did he provide for the progress of Hellenism, and for the downfall of Christian knowledge. He charges the Christians with the inconsistency of instructing pupils in classical learning, at the same time that they opposed the heathen mythology. The account of La Bleterie concerning this matter is just, and his observation deserves to be quoted. "To explain the classic authors, to commend them as models of language, of eloquence and taste, to unveil their beauties, &c. this is not proposing them as oracles of religion and morality." Julian is pleased to confound two things so different, and to erect, under favour of this confusion, the puerile sophistry, which prevails through his whole edict.

to persuade into greater compliances; those who refused, he charged with treason, and proceeded against them as delinquents. He ordered the soldiers, when they received their donative, to throw a piece of frankincense into the fire in honour of the gods. Some few Christians who had been surprised into the practice, returned to the emperor, threw back their donatives, and professed their readiness to die for their religion.

The story of Theodoret, B. III. c. 17, deserves to be told more particularly. Julian caused an altar to be placed near himself, with burning coals and incense upon a table, and required every one to throw some incense into the fire, before he received his gold. Some, who were aware of the danger, feigned sickness; some through fear or avarice complied. But the greater part were deceived. Some of these last going afterwards to their meals, called on the name of Jesus Christ, according to their custom. One of their companions said in a surprise: "What is the meaning of this? you call on Christ, after having renounced him. How?" answered the other, astonished. "You have thrown incense into the fire." They instantly tore their hair, rose up from table, and ran into the forum. "We declare it, they cried, before all the world, we are Christians; we declare it before God, to whom we live, and for whom we are ready to die. We have not betrayed thee, Jesus our Saviour. If our hands have offended, our hearts consented not. The emperor has deceived us, we renounce the impiety, and our blood shall answer for it." They then ran to the palace, and throwing the gold at Julian's feet, "Sacrifice us, say they, to Jesus Christ, and give your gold to those who will be glad to receive it." In a rage he ordered them to be led to execution. The warmth of his temper had well-nigh prevailed over his politic maxims; he recovered himself, however, in time sufficient to countermand the order. He contented himself with banishing them to the distant parts of the empire, forbidding

them to reside in cities. Let the reader see here the philosophizing heathen and the simple Christian in contrast, and judge which religion is human and which is divine.

On some occasions Julian would defile the fountains with Gentile sacrifices, and sprinkle the food brought to market with hallowed water. Christians knew their privilege from St. Paul's well-known determination of the case, yet they groaned under the indignity. Juventinus, and Maximus, two officers of his guard, expostulated with great warmth against these proceedings, and so provoked his resentment, that he punished them capitally, though, with that caution which never forsook him, he declared, that he put them to death not as Christians, but as undutiful subjects.

Jupiter had in no age possessed so zealous a devotee as this prince, who lived at the close of his religious dominion over mankind. The Decius's and the Galerius's, compared with Julian, were mere savages. It is certain, that no ingenuity could have contrived measures more dexterously. Disgrace, poverty, contempt, a moderate degree of severity, checked and disciplined by dissimulation, and every method of undermining the human spirit, were incessantly labouring to subvert Christianity. One sees not how the scheme could have failed, had Providence permitted this prudent and active genius to have proceeded many years in this course: but what a worm is man, when he sets himself to oppose his Maker!

CHAP. IX.

THE CHURCH UNDER JULIAN.

AFTER having taken a view of various circumstances, all tending to illustrate the state of Christendom, it is time to return to the order of our history from the death of Constantius. The people of God,

with light very faint, were in a low state (torn within by the Arian controversy) and scandalized by the madness of the Donatists. The faithful sons and pastors of the church were by no means simple and intelligent in divine things, and were menaced even with destruction by a persecution conducted with as much malice and vigour as any of the foregoing, and with far greater dexterity. The Christian bishops, however, took advantage of Julian's affected moderation to return to their sees. Meletius came back to Antioch ; Lucifer of Cagliari, and Eusebius of Vercellæ, returned to their churches ; but Athanasius remained still in the desert, because of the power of George at Alexandria. Julian wrote a letter to Photinus the heretic, and commended his zeal against the divinity of Jesus Christ*. He ordered Eusebius of Cyzicus, under severe penalties, to rebuild the church of the Novatians, which he had destroyed in the time of Constantius ; a punishment probably just, though like every thing else done by Julian concerning the Christian religion, contrived by him with malignant intentions. He protected the Donatists in Africa, and defended them against the general church and against one another.

The prohibition of human learning decreed by this emperor, induced Apollinarius, the father and the son, to invent something which might stand as a substitute for the loss. The father, a grammarian, wrote in heroics the sacred history, and imitated the Greek tragedians, taking his subjects out of the Scripture. The son, a philosopher, wrote in defence of the Gospel in the form of dialogues, like Plato. Little of these works has come down to us ; the prohibition ceasing with the death of Julian, Christian scholars returned to their former studies, and we cannot judge how far the writings of the Apollinarii merited the rank of Classics. Ecebolius, a famous sophist at Constantinople, yielded to the caresses of Julian, and returned to paganism. After

* Fleury, XV. 4.

the emperor's death he desired to be received again into the church, and prostrating himself at the door of the church, said, "Tread me under foot like salt that hath lost its savour." I know no more of the man to enable me to form a just estimate of his character. We may be convinced, however, that a considerable number of true Christians were yet in the church, amidst all its corruptions, by this important fact, that the greatest part of public teachers and professors of Christianity chose to quit their chairs, rather than to forsake their religion. Proeresius ought to be distinguished. Julian had studied under him at Athens, and from a kindness to his master, excepted him out of the general law. Yet he refused to be thus singled out from his brethren, and retired. Another of them was Victorinus, an African, converted from idolatry in his old age. The manner of his conversion is finely told by Augustine, and I shall have occasion to give it to the reader hereafter. His rhetorical school was given up on occasion of Julian's edict, and he wrote with zeal in defence of divine truth, though his abilities were inadequate to the work, because he applied himself to the study of Scripture too late in life.

Cæsarius, the brother of the famous Gregory Nazianzen, continued to practise physic at court, as he had done in the former reign. His brother wrote to him, how grievous a thing it was to himself and to their aged father (the bishop of Nazianzum in Cappadocia) that he should continue in the court of an infidel, seeking worldly greatness. "Our mother," says he, "could not endure the account. Such the weakness of her sex, and such the fervour of her piety, we are obliged to conceal the truth from her." Cæsarius profited by these rebukes; not all the artifices of Julian could move him. "I am a Christian," says he, "and must continue so." Cæsarius quitted the court, and retired to his pious father, who was as much delighted with his son's

conduct, as earthly-minded parents would have been displeased.

Among the officers of the army was Valentinian, afterwards emperor. He commanded the guards who attended Julian. The emperor one day entered into the temple of Fortune, and on each side of the gate stood the door-keepers, who sprinkled with sacred water those who came in. A drop of this water falling on Valentinian's mantle, he struck the officer with his fist, expressed his resentment at his being defiled with the impure water, and tore that part of his mantle *. Julian, incensed at his boldness, banished him from his presence, not for his Christianity, as he pretended, but because he had not kept his cohort in good order. Sensible, however, of his merit, he still employed him in the army. There were others who like Valentinian defended their Christian profession not with meekness, but wrath. They found, however, the punishment of their folly from Julian, whose partiality and prejudices in favour of paganism urged him to adopt measures, which filled the whole empire with confusion.

At Merum, a city of Phrygia, Amachius the governor of the province ordered the temple to be opened, and the idols to be cleansed. Three Christians, inflamed, says my author †, with Christian

* Sozom. VI. c. 6.

† Socrates, B. III. c. 15. I fear there was in this action more of pride than zeal. Christians having tasted a little of the pleasures of superiority over Pagans in the two last reigns, and being influenced in no high degree by Christian principles in those times, descended again into a state of disgrace and inferiority with much reluctance. In the same spirit, at Dorostora in Thrace, one Æmilian was cast into the fire by the soldiers for having overthrown certain altars. Those only who are in the vigorous exercise of spiritual arms, can with cheerful patience abstain from such as are carnal, when they are under provocation. Yet true Christians might be in a degree overcome by this spirit, and suffer with the love of Christ prevailing in the heart. The intelligent reader will take notice, however, from the commendations bestowed on such conduct by Socrates, how much the spirit of Christianity had declined since the days of Cyprian.

zeal, could not bear the indignity. Burning, continues he, with an incredible love of virtue, they rushed by night into the temple, and broke all the images. The governor, in his wrath being about to chastise many innocent persons, the culprits very generously offered themselves to punishment. He gave them the alternative, to sacrifice, or to die. They preferred the latter, and suffered death with excruciating tortures; more admirable for fortitude than meekness in their behaviour during their dying scenes.

At Pessinus in Galatia, on the confines of Phrygia, two young men suffered death in the presence of Julian. I wish I could say it was for professing the faith of Christ. But one of them had overturned an idol. The emperor put him to death in a cruel manner, with his companion, their mother, and the bishop of the city.

At Ancyra, the capital of Galatia, there was a priest named Basil, who in the former reign had opposed Arianism, and now with equal sincerity resisted idolatry. He went through the city, publicly exhorting the people to avoid polluting themselves with sacrifices. Once observing the Gentiles employed in their religious rites, he sighed, and besought God, that no Christian * might be guilty of such enormity. The governor upon this apprehended him, charging him with sedition, and having tortured him, kept him in prison. Julian himself coming to Ancyra, sent for Basil, who reproached him with his apostasy. Julian said, he had intended to dismiss him, but was obliged to treat him severely on account of his impudence. And in the end this priest suffered death in torture. Busiris was an heretic of the sect of the Abstemious, and was tortured at the same place. His constancy was amazing to the beholders; but he outlived Julian, recovered his liberty, and afterwards quitting his heresy, returned to the general church.

Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, being almost entirely

* Sozomen, B. V. c. 11.

Christian, having destroyed the temple of Fortune since Julian's accession, merited his peculiar hatred; and he oppressed it with heavy exactions. Julian arriving at Antioch, was mortified to find how low the Pagan interest was fallen there*. The feast of Apollo was annually celebrated at Daphne, and on that occasion he expected to see the religious magnificence of Antioch displayed before himself as high priest. "What sacrifice," said he to the priest, "is to be offered at the festival?" "I have brought a goose from home," replied he, "but the city has prepared nothing." "You, all of you," addressing himself to the senate†, "suffer every thing to be carried out of your houses, and given to the Galileans by your wives, who support the poor with your wealth, and give credit to their impiety." He uttered more to the same purpose, but he could not communicate his zeal to the senate or people of Antioch. The rage for Hellenism had ceased for ever.

Mark, the bishop of Arethusa, in Syria, being ordered to pay the expense of rebuilding an idolatrous temple, which he had destroyed in the time of Constantius, and refusing, from conscientious motives, was tortured in an uncommon manner, and bore his sufferings with such astonishing patience, that the prefect said to Julian, "Is it not a shame, sir, that the Christians should be so much superior to us, and that an old man, over whom victory itself would be inglorious, should conquer us?" He was at length

* The indefatigable pains which the Apostate took in support of Paganism is almost incredible. On the festivals to Venus he walked in procession with lewd women of the worst character. So says Chrysostom. Yet Lardner, who always mitigates the bad against Julian, fancies that Julian scorned all debauch. Moreover, he affects to doubt of the truth of the representations of the follies and immoralities of this emperor; because they are the accounts of Christians; and because Greg. Nazianzen is apt to overstate matters. Be it so—but still it will not follow that the *whole* is false; and the judicious reader will rather be disposed to conclude that Lardner himself is greatly prejudiced in favour of Julian.—See Amm. Marcellinus.

† Misopogon.

dismissed; and a number, who had persecuted him, attended afterwards to his instructions. The bishop had saved the life of Julian in the beginning of the reign of Constantius, when all his family was in danger! His character appears to have been that of eminent piety and virtue; as such he is extolled by Gregory Nazianzen, though he had all along supported the Arian party: and considering the entire separation of the Arian from the general church, it is very improbable that Gregory should speak of him so highly as he does, had he not returned to the church, and been in its communion at that time*. It would be tedious to recite all the accounts of those who suffered from the insolent cruelty of Pagans, under the politic connivance and partiality of Julian during his short reign.

In the year 362, George† of Alexandria was murdered by the Pagans of that city, to whom he had made himself obnoxious, by exposing their senseless and ridiculous rites. The providence of God was wonderfully displayed in causing this man, who had distinguished himself as the persecutor of his people, to perish by the hands of idolaters at last. There were not wanting, however, those who gave it out, that he had been murdered by the Athanasian party‡. The letter of Julian to the people of Alexandria, still extant, abundantly confutes this calumny. He blames none but those of his own religion for it, and in his manner of blaming them, he confesses that George deserved even severer punishments, and declares that he will inflict no higher penalty on them than a reprimand, which he hopes they will reverence, “because from their first origin they were Greeks.” Such the partiality of Julian for Gentiles!

Murder of
George of
Alexandria,
A. D.
362.

The reader will not have forgotten, that Atha-

* Theodoret, B. III. c. 7. Fleury, B. XV. c. 17.

† This is he whom monkish ignorance hath exalted into St. George, the Champion of England, against all the rules of history, geography, and common sense.

‡ Socrates, B. III. c. 3.

Athanasius
returns to
his bishop-
ric.

nasius was all this time in concealment. He had spent seven years, partly in the deserts, and partly in the house of a virgin at Alexandria. And the steady affection which the people had for him, and which no persecution of enemies could conquer, had under God preserved him from his enemies. This year, after the death of George, he ventured to return openly to his bishopric. The Arians were obliged to hold their meetings in private houses, and the general voice of the people every where sincerely decided for Athanasius. During the little time that he was allowed to appear in public, he acted as a Christian bishop, treating his enemies with mildness, and relieving the distressed without respect of persons, restoring the custom of preaching on the doctrine of the Trinity, removing from the sanctuary those who had made a traffic of holy things, and gaining the hearts of the people. He held a council at Alexandria, composed of those who had particularly suffered during the Arian persecution, among whom Eusebius of Vercellæ was particularly distinguished. Here those, who, contrary to their settled principles, had been beguiled by Arian subtilties to subscribe what they did not believe, with tears owned how they had been imposed on, and were received into the Church. Here the doctrine of the Trinity was again cleared of the ambiguities which had clouded it, and the Nicene creed was allowed to be the most accurate and exact. Two* schisms unhappily rent the church at this time. The first was at Antioch, where Euzoius the Arian had the chief sway. The followers of Eustathius, the late orthodox bishop, gave themselves up to Paulinus, a presbyter; while another party looked on themselves as belonging to Meletius, who had lately returned from exile. Lucifer of Cagliari, in his return through the East from banishment in Egypt, stopped at Antioch, with the best intentions, and endeavoured to heal the divisions of

* Socrates, B. III. c. 9. Fleury, B. XV. 29.

the church. But by ordaining Paulinus, he confirmed the evils which he meant to cure. Meletius had a church without the city, Paulinus was allowed one within the city; while Euzoius, the most popular, possessed himself of the rest of the churches, but justice requires us to say, that he used his victory with moderation; and respecting the age, meekness, and piety of Paulinus, he did not deprive him of his little church in the city. A rare instance of moderation in an Arian leader! Lucifer himself was offended, that his fellow-sufferer Eusebius would not approve of his conduct at Antioch, and even broke off communion with him. Finding his obstinacy much blamed in the church, he became a schismatic altogether, returned to his own church at Cagliari in Sardinia, where he died eight years after. His followers were called Luciferians, but they were few in number*.

* No man ever exceeded Lucifer in courage and hardness of spirit. When in exile for the Nicene faith, he published certain writings, in which he accuses Constantius with the most astonishing boldness. If there were more of the meekness of the Gospel in these writings, it might be proper to quote some parts of them for the edification of the Christian reader; but there is evidently too much of the man, and too little of the saint, in the whole method and spirit of them. Not content with composing these works, he sent a copy of them to the emperor, who, surprised at his boldness, ordered him to be asked, "whether he had really sent them." "Know," answered the intrepid bishop, "that I did send the book to the emperor, and after having again considered it, I do not retract; and when you have examined the reasons for which I have written in this manner, you will find that we have been strengthened by God, so as to expect with gladness the death which is preparing for us." I wonder not that Athanasius highly commends this man; he himself, though in a less degree, partook of the same spirit. It is useful to mark the declensions of the Christian spirit among good men. The want of a closer attention to the vitals of experimental godliness rendered even the best men in these days too ferocious in their opposition to heretics. Lucifer was consistent throughout; the same temper which appears to have actuated him in his conduct towards Constantius, seduced him into a blameable schism in his latter days; yet who can deny the sincerity of his love for the truth, and the integrity of his heart?—See page 86 of this vol.

It is the design of history to record what may be useful to mankind. In this view, even the faults of the wise and good are serviceable. The unhappy spirit of faction, in the decline of Christian faith and love, split the small remnant of the faithful in Antioch into two parties, which subsisted some time after the beginning of the next century. Two persons, both of undoubted piety, minister there, and yet cannot heal the evil. A third, who had distinguished himself for zeal and piety above many of his age, endeavours to compose the breach, but widens it. He himself soon after, through the impatience of contradiction, makes another party. There was a world of wisdom in St. John's charge to the Church in his old age. "Little children, love one another." The want of it is sure to be succeeded by factions, surmises, and endless divisions. The breach once made is more easily widened than closed. While the Gospel flourished in name through Antioch, the vices of luxury prevailed amidst the evils of heresy and schism. The church there became the mark of reproach to the apostate, in his satire against their city. I turn with more pleasure to behold Eusebius of Vercellæ, who came back to his western bishopric in Italy, where he was received with extraordinary joy. His labours, and those of Hilary of Poitiers, were serviceable in Italy, Gaul, and in general through Europe. There the Arian heresy was suppressed, and peace and unity reigned. False learning and philosophy had not so corrupted the understanding. The Donatists in Africa obtained leave of Julian to recover their churches, and that frantic and turbulent sect proceeded to exercise military violence, an evil with which they had always been infected.

Athanasius was not allowed to enjoy long the sweets of liberty. The gentile Alexandrians represented to the emperor, that he corrupted the city and all Egypt, and that if he continued there, not a Pagan would be left. Julian's affected modera-

tion was tried to the utmost in this case; and the open spirit of persecution, which, contrary to his deliberate maxims, he displayed on this occasion, does immortal honour to the talents and integrity of the Egyptian prelate. “I allowed those Galileans, says he, who had been banished, to return to their countries, not to their churches*. I order Athanasius to leave the city on the receipt of my letter.” The Christians wrote to the emperor, and begged that he might not be taken from them. Provoked to see how deeply the love of Christianity was fixed in them, and what progress the bishop had made in a very little time, Julian answered them †, that since Alexander was their founder, and Serapis and Isis their tutelary gods, it was surprising that the corrupted part should dare to call themselves the community. “I am ashamed, says he, that the gods should suffer any of you Alexandrians to confess himself a Galilean. You forget your ancient felicity, when Egypt conversed with the gods, and you abounded with prosperity. Your Alexander was a servant of the gods, whom Jupiter raised far above any of these, or the Hebrews, who were much better. The Ptolemies, who cherished your city as a daughter, advanced it to its greatness not by preaching Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the execrable Galileans. If you resolve to follow these impostors, agree among yourselves, and desire not to retain Athanasius. Many of his disciples are capable of pleasing you by their impious discourses. But if your affection for him is grounded on his skill and shrewdness (for I hear the man is crafty), for this reason I expel him from your city. That such an intriguer should preside over the people, is dangerous; one who deserves not the name of man, a low despicable creature, who takes a pride in

* Jul. Epist. 26. A distinction certainly unfounded, because contrary to the permission granted to all the rest of the bishops.

† Epist. 51.

hazarding his life, and is fit only to cause disturbances in society." To hasten the execution of his order, Julian wrote to the governor of Egypt*, that if he did not expel Athanasius by a certain time, a time which he limited, he would fine his officers one hundred pounds of gold. "I am deeply afflicted," says he, "at the contempt of the gods, which is shown by this man; it will be highly agreeable to me if you drive the villain out of Egypt, who under my government has had the insolence to baptize Grecian women of quality."

The enmity of the carnal mind against God has seldom been more displayed than in these letters concerning Athanasius. It breaks through all disguises, and transgresses all the bounds of prudence and decorum. The affectation also of despising a man whom he feared, and whose abilities dismayed him, is completely evident. One sees in the weakness of his arguments, how incapable even sensible men are of saying any thing that has the least tendency to shake the mind of a Christian. We must take every opportunity to show the progress of the Gospel; and as, through the scantiness of materials, a part of our evidence must come from the mouth of enemies, it should be observed, that there is in the last letter a confession of the laborious and useful life of Athanasius. He staid not a year in his bishopric since his return; yet in that time he confirmed the faithful in the truth; he demonstrated the power of godliness by kindness, liberality and mercy, to enemies as well as friends; he extended the pale of the church by the conversion of Pagans, some of noble birth; and he merited the indignation, and alarmed the fears of the monarch of the Roman world. Such is the grace of God operating by Christian principles!

The original is *μηδε ανηρ, αλλ' ανθρωπαρεσκος ευτελης*, the malignant spirit of which it is not easy to translate into English.

* Epist. 6.

Athanasius was therefore obliged once more to seek safety by flight. All the faithful gathered round him weeping. "We must retire a little time, friends, says he; it is a cloud that will soon fly over." He took leave of them, recommending his church to the ablest of his friends, and going on board a vessel, he fled by the Nile into the obscurer parts of Egypt. Still his life was in imminent danger. The persecutors followed, and were not far from him, which induced Athanasius to use something of that craftiness with which Julian charged him*. He directed his companions to return to Alexandria, and to meet his enemies. The pursuers asked them earnestly, "Have you seen Athanasius?"—"He is near," say they; "make haste, and you will soon overtake him." Thus deluded, they went forward with speed in vain; and the bishop, who had secreted himself during this scene, returned in private to Alexandria, where he lay concealed till the end of the persecution. Thus did the malice of Julian expose this great and good man, to use the same sort of artifices, which David did, when persecuted by king Saul, who made the same remark as Julian did, "It is told me that he dealeth very subtilly†;" a conduct which probably extorted from him afterwards that prayer, "Remove from me the way of lying."

Athanasius
once more
has re-
course to
flight.

The active spirit of Julian was now bent on the destruction of the Persian monarchy; and the pains and expense which he made use of in sacrifices and auguries, may seem incredible. But his ardent mind was one of the fittest instruments of Satanic infatuation, and Divine Providence was hastening his end. At Antioch he was so provoked by the Psalmody of the Christians, particularly the chorus which they used, "Confounded be all they that worship graven images," that he ordered his Prætorian prefect, Sallust, to punish them. He, though a Gentile, re-

* Sozomen, B. V. c. 15. Socrates, B. III. c. 14.

† 1 Samuel, xxiii. 22.

luctantly obeyed, and seized a number of Christians. One of them, Theodorus, a young man, was so long and so variously tortured, that his life was despaired of. But God preserved him. Ruffinus, the Latin ecclesiastical historian*, declares, that he saw him a long time after, and asked him, whether he felt any pain in his torments. He owned not much; for a young man stood by him, wiped off his sweat, and encouraged his spirit: so that upon the whole he felt during his tortures more pleasure than pain. A memorable instance of the gracious care of God over his servants! Julian seems to have increased in cruelty, as he came nearer his end: He persecuted numbers at Antioch. Gregory Nazianzen, in an oration, describes these facts rather in a rhetorical than in an accurate manner, and speaks also of his horrible incantations, and the cruelties attendant on his superstition. The description is probably exaggerated; but Gregory was both too intelligent and too honest either to have been deceived himself, or to have deceived others altogether. Certain it is, that Julian toward the Christian part of his subjects was a tyrant; and one instance more shall close the account of his severities. Publia, a widow of great reputation, with a number of virgins over whom she presided at Antioch, sung and praised God, when Julian was passing by. In particular, they sang such parts of the Psalms as expose the wickedness and folly of idolatry. Julian ordered them to hold their peace, till he had passed them. Publia, with more zeal than charity, I fear, encouraged them, and caused them to sing on another occasion as he passed, "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered†." Julian in a rage ordered her to be brought before him, and to be buffeted on each side of her face. The effects of passion seem but too visible both in the emperor

* Socrates, B. III. c. 19. Ruff. B. I. c. 36.

† Theodoret, B. III. c. 19.

and the woman : there is, however, this difference ; the one had a zeal for God, the other a contempt.

I studiously avoid secular history as much as possible ; and having no business with Julian's war against the Persians *, I have only to take notice of the circumstances of his death, and to make a reflection or two on the conduct of Divine Providence, on the character of the man, and on the lessons of piety which are obviously imprinted on his story, and on the great deliverance vouchsafed to the Church. He received a mortal wound from a Persian lance in a skirmish. We are told, that, conscious of his approaching end, he filled his hand with the blood, and casting it into the air, said, " O GALILEAN, THOU HAST CONQUERED †." Some think that by that action, he meant to reproach the sun, the idol of the Persians, for his partiality to them, though he himself had been his devout worshipper. It is highly probable, that a soul so active and vehement as his, did express his indignation in some remarkable way at that juncture : neither of the accounts are improbable, though both cannot be true. In his last moments in his tent he expressed a readiness to die, declaring that he had learned from philosophy, how much more excellent the soul was than the body, and that death ought rather to be the subject of joy than of affliction. He boasted, that he had lived without guilt, and that he reflected with pleasure on the innocence of his private, and the integrity of his public life. He

* I shall introduce here a circumstance which happened at Berea, whither Julian went in his march from Antioch. There he found the son of an illustrious citizen, who had been disinherited by his father for following the religion of the emperor. Inviting them to dinner, and placing himself between them, he in vain endeavoured to unite them. Finding the father inexorable, he promised the son to be a father in his place.—His religious addresses to the people of this place were little regarded by the senate of Berea, which was almost entirely Christian. So deeply had this place received Christianity, and so perseveringly preserved it since the days of the Apostles.—Acts xvii.

† Theodoret, B. III. c. 25.

reproved the immoderate grief of the spectators, and begged them not to disgrace by their tears his death, as in a few moments he should mix with heaven and the stars. He entered into a metaphysical argument with Maximus and Priscus, his favourite philosophers, on the nature of the soul. He died after a reign of one year and eight months, in the thirty-second year of his age. A man of good understanding who taught children at Antioch, was in company with Libanius, who asked him what the carpenter's son was doing. It was smartly replied, "the Maker of the world, whom you jocosely call the carpenter's son, is employed in making a coffin." A few days after, tidings came to Antioch of Julian's death*. The story is related also by authors somewhat differently, but its substance seems to be true: nor is there any occasion to suppose the schoolmaster to have been possessed of the spirit of prophecy. The minds of Christians in general must have been extremely agitated during this whole scene of Julian's attempt against the Persian empire: their ardent prayers for the preservation of the church, without the least personal ill will to their imperial persecutor, almost implied an expectation of his death in the answer to their prayers; and the extraordinary rashness, with which his military expedition was conducted, might lead mankind in general to hope, or to fear, it would end in his ruin.

The conduct of Divine Providence is ever to be adored, in hastening the death of so formidable an enemy to his people; whose schemes seemed only to require length of time to effect the ruin of the Church. But he was suffered to aim at too many objects at once, the restoration of idolatry, the ruin of Christianity, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the conquest of Persia. That he should have pursued this last with such avidity, is an instance of the opposition of two parties to each other, both equally.

* Theodoret.

bent on the ruin of the Church : a thing very common in history, by which the Lord frequently saves his people. How much more prudent had it been in Julian to have made an alliance with the Persian monarch, who would gladly have accepted it, and to have united with him in the destruction of Christians, against whom they both were equally incensed. Thus does God infatuate the councils of his enemies, and lead them to quarrel with one another for the good of his Church, rather than to unite for its ruin !

If philosophic pride had not entirely hardened the heart and stupified the conscience of the apostate, he could never have boasted in his last moments of his innocence and integrity. Besides numberless evils which a mind not quite steeled against the checks of conscience must have perceived, the guilt of ten years hypocrisy surely should have moved him to remorse. If sincerity be not essential to virtue upon every possible system, it is hard to say what is. But from the time of his initiation into the Platonic mysteries at Ephesus, to his open avowal of paganism, he dissembled in religion altogether ; he openly professed the Gospel, and secretly worshipped idols. His friend Libanius commends his hypocrisy. Philosophers in general, who held that every thing was God, and yet constantly practised all the rites of vulgar polytheism, dissembled continually. The mind of Julian seems with astonishing inconsistency to have united, in sincere belief, the refinements of philosophy with the vulgar idolatry : but his hypocrisy with respect to Christianity, so artfully persisted in till the death of Constantius, is one of the completest instances of deceit I read of in history. That man must either be extinct at death, or be happy by a re-union with the Deity, was the belief of the philosophers in general : and Julian, like them, avows it at his death, and, like Cicero *, he had not the least idea of punishment

See his Senectute, toward the end.

for sin in an after-life. What is meant then by the praises so profusely conferred in our age on philosophic infidels? Are hypocrisy, atheism, the extinction of the feelings of natural conscience, and a total exemption from all that modest sense of imbecility which is so becoming a frail creature like man, are these virtues? Shall we be told in triumph, how nobly Hume the philosopher died? Is the very worst state of mind to be gloried in as the best? Is not scepticism and indifference about a future state, a mark of what the Scripture calls a reprobate mind, however it may be complimented by unbelievers with the appellation of a philosophical spirit? How much more amiable a prince would Julian have been, if he had lived like Antoninus Pius, following the rules of plain and common sense; and how large a part of the defects and vices of his character was owing to this same philosophy!

Yet a tear of compassion is due to this extraordinary man. He had seen a poor sample of the Gospel in the lives and manners of the family of Constantine, and had suffered deep and cruel injuries from them. Philosophers cautiously watched him when very young, and infused their poison with dexterity. Useful lessons may be learned from history by young persons, who among ourselves having been educated by Christians of mere formal orthodoxy, are ever prone to be seduced by heretical philosophers. While those, who profess the Gospel, are loudly called on to take care, that they express their religious zeal by something more substantial than words and forms. Young minds who are under the influence of unfruitful professors, are seriously warned, by the apostasy of Julian, to perform with diligence what he neglected, namely, To search the Scriptures for themselves with prayer. Had Julian been as studious of the Greek Testament as he was of Plato, and prayed as earnestly to God through Christ as he did or seemed to do to Jupiter and Apollo, he might have escaped the snare of Satan.

at men confirm themselves in apostasy and infidelity, by hearkening to every thing that tends to produce these evils, and they avoid the force of divine truth by contemptuous neglect and indifference.

I wish the spirit of the Church could be more an object of our commendation during this whole scene than it is. No doubt many prayed sincerely, and we have seen abundant proofs of godly men choosing to suffer rather than to sin. But it is evident, that there was a great want of primitive meekness and patience. Persecution under Julian was incurred too frequently by Christians without cause. Even just sentiments on this subject were lost by many. Sozomen, speaking of a suspicion, that Julian was slain by a Christian, admits that if it were so, none could easily blame the action: and supposes that Christians might do innocently at least what heathen patriots have done so laudably*. Such sentiments, compared with the primitive spirit of the Gospel, mark the degeneracy of the times, at the same time that they afford most lamentable advantages to the unbeliever.

CH A P. X.

THE CHURCH UNDER JOVIAN.

THIS prince succeeded Julian in the year 363, aged about 33 years. His reign was terminated by sudden death, after little more than seven months: nor was there any thing peculiarly shining or eminent in his talents or character. Civil history does not distinguish him. In ecclesiastical history he merits a particular attention; for he is the first of † the

Jovian
reigns little
more than
seven
months,
A. D.
363.

* Sozom. B. VI. c. 11.

† The first Constantine seems in doctrine to have followed the Semi-Arianism of Eusebius, or perhaps more properly may be said to have not understood the Gospel in any light; and the latter part of his life, it is allowed on all hands, was very faulty. Of Constantius, nothing need be said. Of Philip, in

Roman emperors who gave some clear evidences, though not unequivocal, of real love to the truth as it is in Jesus. It were to be wished that the accounts of this emperor had been more explicit and large. Neither his faith, however, nor his practice seem to contradict* what I have asserted; and Providence just showed him to the Roman world, that he might restore the sinking Church, and then removed him.

In Julian's time he had given a noble mark of Christian sincerity, by declaring that he would rather quit the service than his religion†. Yet Julian kept him near his person, and employed him in his fatal expedition; an unequivocal proof, that his talents and capacity, though not of the first rate, were by no means defective. In stature he was much above the common size, and large in proportion, so that it was difficult to find an imperial habit that would suit him. The most striking feature in his character seems to have been a consistent frankness, openness, and integrity, such as I look for in vain among mere philosophers and mere heroes. Nor can it easily exist, except in minds erected by divine grace above the crooked pursuits of secular ambition. Though the empire of the Roman world was in his eye, he forgot not that he was a Christian, and was solicitous to confess his Saviour at a time the last century, we know much more evil, notwithstanding his Christian profession. I could wish the reader, with me, to estimate the worth of characters by their spirituality and holiness, not by talents and exploits. If he does not, he will wonder that I should make light of the great Constantine in comparison of the obscure Jovian.

* I say seem to contradict; for I am aware that Ammianus charges him with gluttonous and libidinous excesses. But this author was not a Christian, and he expresses his hopes, that he might have corrected them, and owns that he was very sincere in his religion. This seems as much in Jovian's favour as may be expected from Ammianus.

† I follow the Abbé de la Bleterie in his life of this prince, which is beautifully written; yet I keep my eye on the ancient historians all along.

When the cause of Paganism must have predominated much in Julian's army. "I am a Christian, says he, I cannot command idolaters, and I see the wrath of the living God ready to fall on an army of his enemies." "You command Christians! exclaimed those who heard him; the reign of superstition has been too short to efface from our minds the instructions of the great Constantine and of his son Constantius." Jovian heard with pleasure, and assented; and the Pagans in the army seem to have been silent*.

The army was in a situation of extreme danger at the time of Julian's death; far advanced into an enemy's country, and without provisions. The rashness of his predecessor had involved Jovian in these difficulties, and compelled him to negotiate with Sapor the Persian king; whose craft imposed on the undesigning simplicity of the new emperor. By affected delays, the old Persian monarch protracted the negotiation, till the increasing distress of the Romans for want of provisions enabled Sapor to dictate the terms entirely. Ammianus thinks it would have been a thousand times better to have tried the chance of war, than to have accepted any of the conditions. But Jovian was a Christian; he could not gain advantages by fraud and deceit in the course of the negotiation; the preservation of the lives of men was to him of more importance than of the distant provinces which he was obliged to cede to Sapor: and it is remarkably providen-

* Theod. IV. 2. Socrat. III. 22. Both these historians tell the same story, though the former somewhat more fully. Ammianus observes, indeed, that the victims and entrails were inspected for Jovian: on which account Mr. Gibbon exults over the destruction of Theodoret's legend. But who does not see, that the superstitious practice having been in high vogue under Julian, it might be continued, for the present at least, even without Jovian's knowledge? How does it appear that Theodoret's narrative deserves to be called a legend, any more than Ammianus's, or even Gibbon's? Besides, this object takes no notice at all of the authority of Socrates, who in candour and veracity is generally allowed to have been eminent.

tial, that the first instance we have on record of an ignominious and disadvantageous treaty concluded by the Romans, was under a monarch, who it is hoped belonged sincerely to Him whose kingdom is not of this world. Heavy are the complaints which Roman writers make of this dishonourable peace: Gregory Nazianzen laments it, but throws the blame on Julian: the pagan historian Eutropius seems to justify Jovian by calling it a treaty ignoble indeed, but necessary.

I seem to behold new maxims of government appearing under the first faithful emperor. The rule of the Psalmist*, in controversy, was perhaps never more punctually followed than by Jovian. Though the inhabitants of Nisibis in Mesopotamia petitioned him, with the most vehement importunity, to suffer them to defend their fortress against the Persian king, from their extreme unwillingness to leave their native country, he answered, That he had expressly sworn to deliver up the city, and that he could not elude an oath by vain subtilties. Crowns of gold were usually offered by cities to new princes. The people of Nisibis, willing to remain under the Roman government, very sedulously performed this act of homage. Jovian refused the crown; but they at length in a manner compelled him to accept it. Nothing, however, could move him from his purpose. He obliged the inhabitants to depart with their effects, somewhat earlier than he would have done, had he not been exasperated by their insults and importunities. Yet he seems to have done all that circumstances allowed. He ordered Amida, whither most of them retired, and which had been almost ruined by Sapor, to be rebuilt for their use, and settled them there. Not only Pagan, but some Christian authors, reproach Jovian for executing the treaty with so much fidelity.

* Psal. xv. 4. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

I confess he appears to me highly amiable in those very things, for which he has been so much censured. It was an act worthy of a prince who served Jesus Christ, to dread more the loss of truth and the wrath of God, on account of perjury, than the loss of territory. It is difficult for men to divest themselves of the regard for worldly honour and greatness. This illusion gives Jovian a mean appearance in the eyes of most writers*. Could such a man be fit to govern an empire? Let it be remembered, however, that if Christian principles place a man under disadvantages in some worldly respects, they compensate for these in others. The same fear of God, which hindered Jovian from breaking his word, would have kept him from entering into a war of such madness and folly, as he found himself involved in at his accession.

These secular transactions would not have engaged my attention, were they not connected with an illustration of the religious principles and conduct of the prince. When I can meet with an exalted personage, who evidences a Christian spirit, I shall think his actions belong properly to this history. But to proceed : at Carrhæ in Mesopotamia, a city wholly pagan, the messenger, who brought the first news of Julian's death, was near being stoned. Never was paganism more completely disappointed. Her hopes in an instant vanished as a dream, and the Church triumphed in praising her God, who is ever faithful to his promises. Real saints would doubtless show their thankfulness in a becoming manner, and Gregory Nazianzen was particularly careful, in an oration which he published on the occasion, to exhort Christians to display their meekness, humility, and charity. But compassion for a perishing enemy, and fear at the prospect of

* It is astonishing how the Abbé de la Bleterie could be induced to think, that Jovian was not bound to execute his promise, and should write a dissertation in support of this opinion.

prosperity were not exhibited as they ought to have been. Antioch, in particular, personally hostile to Julian, and filled with Arianism, demonstrated how much it had fallen from Christian purity. Public entertainments, sacred and profane festivals, filled this voluptuous city. Dances and public shows were seen in the churches; and the theatres resounded with insulting acclamations. There the victory of the cross was published, there Maximus was addressed, as if present: "Fond Maximus! what is become of thy predictions? God and his Christ have conquered."

Jovian led his army to Antioch, in which he remained six weeks, and applied himself to the regulation of religion. The conduct of his predecessor had involved him in intricate difficulties, both in ecclesiastical affairs and in civil. The whole empire was torn with distractions, and Julian's affected toleration had been attended with the horrors of real persecution. Already on his death the temples were every where shut*; the priests absconded; the philosophers had quitted the cloak, and resumed their common dress: to so great a despair were the pagans reduced. Within the church, the Orthodox and the Arians were every where at variance; Antioch itself was split into three divisions. The Donatists in Africa exercised a turbulence that required the interference of the magistrate. The Novatians, faulty only in a narrow bigotry and excess of discipline, had kept up some good understanding with the general Church, had joined her in the defence of the faith against Arianism, had endured persecution in common with her, while Arianism triumphed; and some of them at Martinium in Paphlagonia had cut in pieces several companies of soldiers who under Constantius had been sent to oblige them to embrace Arianism. But during the reign of Julian, if we except the mad excesses of

* Socrates.

the Donatists, a kind of truce had prevailed among the contending parties. Immediately on his death their eyes were solicitously directed to his successor, to see what measures he would pursue. Himself a sincere believer of the primitive faith, he yet abhorred persecution. Convinced that conscience could not be forced, and that a voluntary religion only was acceptable to God, he made a law, by which he permitted the Pagans to re-open their temples, and exercise their religion. Yet he peremptorily forbade witchcraft and impostures. He suffered the public sacrifices, but put a stop to the overflowings of magic and enchantments, with which Julian had filled the empire; in fine, he granted the Pagans more than Constantius had allowed, and placed them in the same state in which they had been left by the great Constantine. In this toleration there was an effective sincerity, to which that of Julian had no just pretensions. In the former reign, the Christian found himself only nominally free; in the latter, the Pagan found himself really so. Philosophers themselves were admitted to court; though it could not be expected, that they should become the bosom friends of a Christian emperor. Some of the courtiers insulted them; Jovian himself was too just and generous to do it. Even Libanius and Maximus, the pillars of Paganism and philosophy, were spared; we may thence judge how mildly others were treated. At Constantinople also, sacrifices were publicly offered for the solemnity of the consulship of Jovian. He even permitted Themistius, an illustrious pagan magistrate, to harangue before him on the propriety of religious freedom, and the rights of conscience, and to thank him for the liberty which he gave to his subjects. His speech on the occasion need not be given; the sentiments are now common and trite; something right and something wrong, as is usual at this day, appears on the face of it. The right of private judgment and the iniquity of

compulsion are justly stated ; and, like all men who are void of any true religious principle, he intimates that all religions are equally true and equally pleasing to God. But it seems a pitiable thing, that none of the learned and philosophical Pagans should have found out this doctrine before ! if they had, how much Christian blood would have been spared ! It would have redounded more to their credit, if they had made or propagated this discovery during the Christian persecutions. To speak of it now, when they were the inferior party, looks more like selfishness than liberality. Philosophers wrote against Christians with much animosity, and some of them joined actively in persecuting : I recollect not one, before Themistius, who pleaded for toleration.

At the same time Jovian declared Christianity to be the established religion, and replaced in the standard the figure of the cross, which Julian had taken away. He ordered the Christians to be restored to their churches, recalled their exiles, and reinstated them in all their privileges. One Magnus, an officer of note, had burned by his private authority the church of Berytus in Phœnicia. He was himself an unprincipled man, ardent in persecution. Jovian was very near beheading him ; but contented himself with obliging him to rebuild the church at his own expense.

Thus did Jovian prove himself the defender of Christianity as the established religion, and of toleration at the same time. The ingenuity of man can proceed no farther in such a subject. The principles of church government, which have for an hundred years subsisted among ourselves, were in their great outlines introduced by Jovian into the empire : and on the whole convey a just idea of the integrity of his heart and the soundness of his understanding*.

* This praise seems due to Jovian in general for his conduct ; at the same time I am far from pretending to determine pre-

Athanasius had no sooner heard of the death of Julian, than he suddenly appeared again at Alexandria, to the agreeable surprise of his people. A letter from Jovian confirmed him in his office, and it was conceived in these terms:—"To the most religious friend of God, Athanasius. As we admire beyond expression the sanctity of your life, in which shine forth the marks of resemblance to the God of the universe*, and your zeal for Jesus Christ our Saviour, we take you, venerable bishop, under our protection. You deserve it, by the courage which you have shewn in the most painful labours, and your contempt of persecutors and menacing words. Holding in your hand the helm of faith, which is so dear to you, you cease not to combat for the truth, nor to edify the Christian people, who find in you the perfect model of all virtues. For these reasons we recall you immediately, and we order you to return, to teach the doctrine of salvation. Return to the holy churches; feed the people of God. Let the pastor at the head of the flock offer up prayers for our person; for we are persuaded, that God will diffuse on us and on our

Athanasius
appears
openly at
Alexandria.

cisely the line which he ought to have pursued. Numbers speak with great confidence on the subject of religious establishments and toleration, who have never weighed the difficulties with which it is involved. A more proper place to investigate it may occur, when we come to the reign of Theodosius.

* Mr. Gibbon calls this impious and extravagant flattery. Who but a person either exceedingly prejudiced or ignorant would have hazarded such an assertion? I scruple not to charge the learned critic with both. His prejudice will not allow him to bear a short interval of the prosperity of Athanasius with patience, and his ignorance of the Scriptures has led him here to express his prejudice with peculiar absurdity. Every child in divinity knows, that to say, a man resembles God, or bears his image and likeness, means no more, than "that he is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him," that he is what Adam was before the fall, what every Christian is made by grace. What an immensity of learning do some men attain, without knowing the very elements of the New Testament!

fellow Christians his signal favours, if you afford the assistance of your prayers."

Jovian wrote to him again, to ask instruction with respect to the Arian controversy. Athanasius, entering into his views, convened some bishops, and answered him in the name of the synod, recommending to him the Nicene faith, and defending it in his usual manner. Jovian directed him to come to Antioch, where he was graciously received. Arian and Candidus, two Arians, relations also of the emperor, came to him at Antioch, having conceived some hope of his favour. Euzoius also, the bishop of that city, where Arianism was strong, and some other Arians, laboured to ingratiate themselves with the eunuchs of the palace, as their party had done in the reign of Constantius. The Macedonians too, the followers of the deposed bishop of Constantinople, who had taught them to deny the divinity of the Holy Ghost, solicited the emperor for the predominancy in the church. "I hate disputes, replied Jovian; I love and honour men of peace, and promoters of union." The Arians, confounded with such a sentence, communicated with Meletius the orthodox bishop of Antioch, and subscribed the council of Nice. It is difficult to believe their sincerity; under any the most moderate account that can be given of the controversy, Arian duplicity must strike every reader. At any rate Jovian was not to blame; he plainly declared, that he would constrain no man, and he said so sincerely. But power, not mere toleration, was their object. Jovian also strove in vain to heal the division between the followers of Meletius and Paulinus, which has been mentioned above.

The Arians of Alexandria* attempted to gain the episcopal see for a person named Lucius, a man void of all piety, and made application for him to the

* Opera Athanasii, V. 1. p. 782. See Bleterie's Life of Jovian.

emperor, with Lucius himself at their head. The friends of Athanasius sent deputies also on their part, to oppose them. The interference of Constantine, and still more of Constantius, in the expulsion of bishops in cities of great note in the empire, had established an unhappy precedent, which was followed too frequently. A short extract of the conferences may throw some light on the character of Jovian, and on the state of religion at that time. "We beg your power, your majesty, your piety," say the Arians, "to give us audience." Who and whence are you? "Sir, we are Christians." Whence, and of what city? "Of Alexandria." What do you desire of me? "To give us a bishop." I have ordered Athanasius to return to his see. "Sir, this man has been banished many years, for crimes of which he is not cleared." A soldier of the emperor's guard interposed: "Sir, give yourself the trouble to examine who these people are, the remains of the faction of George, the villain who desolated Alexandria." At these words, Jovian, (who was on horseback when they met him,) spurred his horse and left them. The Arians were not so repulsed; they presented themselves to Jovian a second time. "We have several heads of accusation against Athanasius, which we are able to prove. It is thirty years since he was banished by Constantine and Constantius of immortal memory." The accusations of ten, twenty, thirty years, replied Jovian, are out of date. I know why he was accused, and how he was banished. A third time Jovian being importuned by the same petitioners, and the deputies of the Athanasians speaking at the same time, Jovian said, "When all speak together, one cannot understand who is in the right. Choose two persons on both sides; I cannot answer both of you." The Arians begged the emperor to set over them any person except Athanasius. "I have made inquiries," said he; "he teaches sound doctrine." "It is true

Athanasius
recalled to
his diocese.

he speaks well," answered the Arians, "but means ill." The emperor replied, "I need no other testimony; if he means ill, he must give account of that to God: We men hear words; God alone knows the heart." "The treasurer," said a lawyer, a cynic philosopher, "has taken some houses from me on account of Athanasius." Is Athanasius responsible for the actions of the treasurer? "I have a charge against Athanasius," said another lawyer, named Patalas, a Pagan. What business, said the emperor, has a Pagan like thee to trouble himself about Christians? Enraged at the attempts of the Arians to corrupt the eunuchs of his court, he made them to undergo the torture, to discover the bottom of the intrigue, and said he would treat his first domestics in the same manner, if they followed such measures. He sent Athanasius to his diocese, where he lived ten years longer, and directed the affairs of the church.

The plainness and frank manners of Jovian, mixed with firmness, are evident in this account; so is the inveterate malignity of the Arians; and every serious reader will deplore the power which Satan gains over a people once tinged with the spirit of religious party in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, and will see matter of caution not to depart from the simplicity of the Gospel.

While Jovian was at Antioch, he was much aspersed by the wits of that city. His person, it was said, was formed at the expense of his mind. The measure of his stature is that of his folly. Calumnies were propagated against him, and the spirit of satire was indulged with much freedom.

But, notwithstanding these censures, the acknowledgments of pagans themselves in favour of Jovian; his talent of knowing men, and employing them accordingly; his attention to find out persons of merit; his care of Christian doctrine and piety; his integrity and openness; and above all, his strict conscientiousness, like to which I find nothing in

pagan heroes and patriots; announced, though not the splendid genius, yet the man of sound understanding, and promised to the world a wise and pious government. It is impossible that Ammianus could have had a mean opinion of him, since, when he speaks of his faults, he owns that he might have lived to correct them. He seems to have been a character of the solid, not the shining kind; the wickedness of the times, I fear, was unworthy of him. He was soon removed, and so very suddenly, that it was suspected, he had not died a natural death; though of this no proof was given. The Christians sincerely wept, the Pagans in general spake well of him; the Arians soon endeavoured to take advantage of his decease, and the Church was once more involved in persecution.

CHAP. XI.

THE CHURCH UNDER VALENS.—THE DEATH, CHARACTER, AND WRITINGS OF ATHANASIUS.

JOVIAN was succeeded by two brothers, Valentinian and Valens; the former governed in the West, the latter in the East. Valentinian followed the plan of Jovian, in the affairs of the church. Valens, a man of weak capacity himself, had not been yet baptized, and seemed as little qualified to judge of matters of religion as of government. Valentinian, whom fraternal affection induced to make him his colleague in the empire, had been in vain advised to choose another person. The Arians, who, under Eudoxius bishop of Constantinople, had ruled the capital in all ecclesiastical affairs, in the time of Constantius, rejoiced to find Valens equally supple and ductile as that emperor. Even the party of

Macedonius, a sort of Semi-Arians, who allowed the Son of God to be like the Father, though not of the same substance, and who were likewise enemies to the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, could not gain the favour of the emperor, but were persecuted as well as the orthodox ; while Eudoxius with the complete Arians, who would not allow the similarity of the Son to the Father, engrossed all the churches. The Semi-Arians, induced by these circumstances, entered into connexions with Liberius bishop of Rome, and reunited themselves with the orthodox churches of the West: yet one can have no great idea of the sincerity of this sect, as they would have probably persisted in their heresy, if Valens had favoured their notion ; many of them, however, might be perverted by the subtilties of disputation, and be more orthodox in their hearts than in their expressions. Valens * ordered all the followers of the Nicene faith to be expelled from Constantinople. In this persecution were included the Novatians : their churches were ordered to be shut up, as well as their persons to be banished. For the orthodox of the general church had no places of worship from the days of Constantius ; and Jovian their friend had not lived to come to his capital. One Agelius, the Novatian bishop, was exiled, a man of admirable sanctity and virtue, and remarkable for his perfect contempt of money. Yet was he restored not long after, and he recovered the churches of his communion. He owed this, under Providence, to one Marcian, a man of learning and piety, a Novatian presbyter, who tutored two daughters of the emperor. On this account the Novatians were at length tolerated ; while the general church suffered the rigour of banishment, and was silent by compulsion, and while the Arians tyrannized over all the Christian world in the East. Yet the Novatians were still infested by the Arians, because they

* Soz. C. IX.

cherished and loved in a tender manner their brethren of the general church *.

We must once more see Athanasius attacked by the enemies of Christian piety. About the beginning of the year 367, Valens, at the solicitation of Eudoxius, ordered the bishops who had been deposed in the reign of Constantius, and were afterwards restored, to be expelled from their churches. By virtue of this order, Tatian, governor of Alexandria, attempted to drive Athanasius out of that city. The prelate had the hearts of his people. Long experience of his integrity and virtue, respect for his talents, and compassion for his sufferings, had secured him this the most reasonable and the most glorious of all empires. The prefect was so sensible of this, that for some time he dared not proceed to execute his orders. At length, he brake one night with an armed force into his church, where he generally lodged, and sought for his person in every place, but in vain. Athanasius, probably warned beforehand of the danger, had retired, and remained for four months concealed in his father's sepulchre. This was the fourth time that he had fled from Alexandria. Valens, however, from the dread he seems to have had of the people, ordered him to be recalled; nor could Lucius, the Arian bishop of Alexandria, prevail on him to give Athanasius any more disturbance.

Edict of
Valens,

A. D.
367.

Athanasius
flies from
Alexandria
the fourth
time.

* *Ἡγάπων καὶ ἐσιεργον.* B. IV. c. 9. Socrates. This historian having himself a particular acquaintance with the Novatians, we learn something from him concerning this people. I wish he had given us more information. But their charity and tenderness toward the general church in its distress, while they themselves were indulged with toleration, and their suffering some molestation from the reigning party, because of their affection for those who endured persecution for righteousness sake, reflects an amiable lustre on the character of these Dissenters. And I wish the lesson it is calculated to teach were well attended to at this day. Let men who love the faith of the Gospel, and are content to suffer for it in the world, adorn it by brotherly love, and leave political contentions and the arts of ambition to the enemies of the Gospel.

About this time Valens himself received baptism from Eudoxius, who had such an ascendant over the weak emperor, as to induce him to swear, that he would never depart from the Arian creed*.

A council was held at Laodicea in Phrygia about this time. A few of its canons shall be mentioned, as they will throw some light on the spirit of religion. One of them prohibits the ordination of men lately baptized ; and so far agrees with the sacred rule †. The choice of those appointed to the priesthood was not to be left to the people, but the bishops were to be chosen by the metropolitans, after a long probation of their faith and morals. In this, an alteration was doubtless made from the customs, which had obtained before the time of Constantine, and the metropolitans now exercised the same power which the Apostles had done, who doubtless ordained pastors in all the churches by their own authority. The council orders ‡ clergymen not to lend money upon usury, nor to visit taverns and houses of entertainment, nor to assist at the public shows exhibited at marriages and festivals. A proof, I fear, that their manners were grown more lax and dissolute. The invocation of angels is also solemnly forbidden ; a proof that this species of idolatry had already crept into the church, and a condemnation of the practice of the Romanists. Presbyters are forbidden also to practise magic and enchantment ; pity, that there should be occasion to make such a canon ! On the whole, this council, though it appears seriously bent on the support of good discipline and manners, evidences a great and deep corruption to have taken place in the church of Christ.

Valens himself, being at Tomi, a city of Scythia, near the mouth of the Danube, ordered Brettannio the bishop to meet and communicate with him and his Arian attendants, who came to the bishop's

* Theod. IV. c. 12. Fleury, B. 16. 8.

† 1 Tim. iii. 6.

‡ Fleury, B. XVI. c. 12.

church for that purpose. Brettannio firmly refused, professing his regard for the Nicene faith, and leaving the emperor he went to another church, and all his congregation followed him. Valens with his attendants being left alone, was so enraged, that he ordered the bishop to be banished, though political reasons induced him soon after to permit his return. The Scythians were indignant at the banishment of their bishop, a man renowned among them* for piety and integrity, and Valens dreaded their revolt. Of the conduct of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen in these times, it will be more proper to speak in the course of their story, as they are men, who deserve to be held out to the more distinct attention of the reader. Antioch was sorely shaken with the conflicts of this persecution. There Arianism triumphed, both in numbers and in power, though the influence of the two orthodox bishops, Meletius and Paulinus, under God, preserved a considerable remnant. For wherever men of firm piety ruled in the churches, they were enabled to check the torrent. On the death of Eudoxius in 370, the Arians chose Demophilus in his room, and Valens approved of the election. The orthodox elected at the same time Evagrius bishop of Constantinople. Valens, incensed, banished both him and the bishop who had dared to ordain him.

Death of
Eudoxius,
A. D.
370.

On this occasion eighty ecclesiastics were sent to the emperor at Nicomedia, to complain of his conduct. Enraged at their presumption, and yet afraid of a sedition, he gave private orders to Modestus, his prefect, to murder them secretly. The execution of this order deserves to be known in all ages. The prefect pretended that he would send them into banishment, with which they cheerfully acquiesced. But he directed the mariners to set the ship on fire as soon as they were gone to sea. The mariners did so, and going into a boat which

* Soz. B. VI. 21.

followed them, escaped. The burning vessel was driven by a strong west wind into the haven of Dacidizus, on the coast of Bithynia, where it was consumed with the ministers*. The intention of concealing what was done was frustrated; and the wickedness and inhumanity of the murder appeared more odious, by the meanness with which it was contrived.

Cæsarius, the brother of Gregory Nazianzen, had been recalled to court by Jovian, and Valens made him questor of Bithynia. His brother exhorted him to disengage himself from the world, which at length he did, and died soon after.

A council at
Antioch.

Athanasius had the courage to expel from the church the governor of Lybia, a man wholly given up to cruelty and debauchery: nor was the world then so degenerated, as to despise altogether the discipline of the church. A council held at Antioch by the faithful, consisting of an hundred and forty-six bishops, pathetically bewailed the times: and among other things, they observed, that the infidels laughed at these evils, and staggered the weak; while true Christians avoiding the churches, as being now nurseries of impiety, went into deserts, and lifted up their hands to God with sighs and tears.

Meletius, who was the chief of this council, was banished the third time, and sent into Armenia, his own country. The other bishop, Paulinus, whose flock was small, was spared. The Meletians, deprived of their churches, assembled at the foot of a mountain near Antioch, and heard the word of God. But from this place also they were driven, and many of them were thrown into the Orontes.

Maximus, the philosopher and friend of Julian, was at length made a victim to the jealousy of Valens, for some magical contrivances real or pretended,

At Edessa, the orthodox were wont to meet in a

* Socrates, B. IV. c. 16.

field; Valens ordered them to be dispersed; but the resolution of a woman who hastened thither as on purpose to suffer martyrdom, staggered his mind, and caused him to cease from the attempt.

Another method was taken: the pastors of Edessa were sent into banishment; some of them were conducted to Antinous*, where observing the greater part of the inhabitants to be Pagans, they employed themselves in taking pains for their eternal salvation. Protophenes particularly taught the children to write and to read the psalms of David and suitable passages of the New Testament; and though the account we have here is very defective, there is reason to believe, that the progress of the Gospel was increased by these means†.

Athanasius died in the year 373, after he had been bishop forty-six years; and being desired to nominate a successor, he mentioned Peter, an aged saint, and the faithful companion of his labours. Let us pause a little, to view the writings and character of this great man.

Death of
Athanasius,
A. D.
373.

A person so actively employed, and so wholly taken up during the course of a long life with a single controversy, is not likely to leave behind him writings very instructive to after ages. I run through his works, and find nothing important in them, except what relates to the Arian controversy. As a writer, he is nervous, clear, argumentative, and every where discovers the man of sense, except in the Life of Anthony the monk, and other monastic pieces; the superstitions and follies of which unhappy perversion of piety received but too liberal a support from his influence. But such were the times; and in public life, the abuses of Christianity were so many, that I wonder not that the most godly had the strongest relish for monasticism, in an age when the knowledge of the genius of the

His
writings.

* A place, I suppose, in Thebais in Egypt.

† Fleury, 32. B. V.

Gospel was so much darkened. His two treatises against the Gentiles bid the fairest to show his general knowledge and spirit in religion, because they are exempt from the Arian controversy. In them he discovers the source of idolatry to be the corruption of the heart, in consequence of the Fall. Men being fallen from God, cannot erect their minds to things spiritual, but sink down to things earthly and sensual. He allows the evil propensity of nature, and describes its effects very justly; at the same time like Justin, and other of the fathers whom we have seen, he speaks of the free-will of man, and of his power of resisting this propensity, using the same Greek term*. He speaks very solidly of the incarnation of the Son of God, describes it as essential to the recovery of fallen man, and speaks of the propriety of man's being taught by Him, who is the Wisdom of the Father. Redemption by his cross he speaks of in a manner perfectly scriptural: but little is to be found in him of the experience of these doctrines, and their application to the heart and conscience; nor does he dwell much on the virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit. Opposition to Arianism absorbed his whole soul, and he keeps it in constant view throughout all his writings, or nearly so, except in his two discourses to the Gentiles. His address to Constantius is vehement and persuasive; but though full of integrity, it is wanting in meekness. In his apology for his flight, he amply vindicates himself by scriptural and apostolical authority. His book on the Psalms explains very justly their excellencies. He shows, that in them is found the whole sum of duty, all the arguments of prayer, all the doctrines of religion, prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, and all the histories of the Old Testament: he observes, with great propriety, that the believer may see in them the state and frame of his own soul,

* *Antikepsion.*

what he himself feels ; and let a man's state be what it may, every one may find words adapted to his condition, and a true relief for every trouble. His treatise on the unpardonable sin is a monument of infirmity in a great and noble mind, and such an infirmity as men of great sincerity are more exposed to than others ; I mean that of wresting every subject that we handle, to promote the darling object of our own minds. To defend the Trinity was his ; I wonder not therefore, that Arianism with him is represented as the " unpardonable sin," and truly the conduct of the Arians in his time would naturally give an edge to his spirit. I have represented things in as faithful a manner as I can from the lights of antiquity which remain to us ; and I must say, independently of all doctrinal sentiments, there appears no comparison between the two parties in their moral conduct. Every thing mean and sordid, cruel and inhuman, ambitious and perfidious, is found on the side of Arianism. The fruits of genuine religion evidently appear on the other side, so far as I can discover hitherto. However melancholy may have been the scenes of human wickedness, which we have reviewed, and however faint the marks of godliness in any person, still " real virtue was seen the attendant of orthodox sentiments alone." Is it to be wondered, that Athanasius, who knew and felt all this, should be betrayed into such an interpretation of the unpardonable sin ?

Comparison
of Trinita-
rians and
Arians.

In his defence of the Trinity, he guards it on all sides with extreme exactness. He is not solicitous to remove the mystery ; he leaves the account as it always should be left, inadequate and imperfect, clear and exact only so far as the Scripture has explained it. He is not careful to clear it of the objections, and to answer the captious questions of the enemies of the doctrine. But all sorts of opposition to it, find in him a just refutation. He asserts every where the Trinity in Unity. Among the rest, the

heresy of Apollinarius, who denied to Jesus Christ an human soul, was by him effectually confuted. But not to dwell longer on a subject we have had so much occasion to consider, I observe, that though the creed, commonly called that of Athanasius, be not his, yet it contains precisely his views and sentiments*.

Athanasius shines, however, more in his life than in his writings: his conduct every where appears consistent and upright, sharpened too much by long and cruel opposition indeed, yet never governed by malice, always principled by the fear of God in this whole controversy. I doubt not but he was raised by a special providence to defend the doctrine of the Trinity; and while men of no religion are blaming his asperity, let us admire the strength of that grace, which kept him so invincibly firm and calmly magnanimous, and through his means preserved to us this precious part of Christian doctrine. The Lord has ever raised up instruments of this strong and hardy cast, to maintain his cause in the world; and let it be remembered, in regard to this great and good man, that after all the abuse thrown on his character respecting persecution, there is very much of persecution indeed, but persecution by him always suffered, never inflicted on others.

The choice of Peter, as his successor at Alexandria, was confirmed by the whole church; and the almost universal respect which was paid to the virtues of Athanasius, seemed to put his election out of the reach of controversy. But imperial violence prevailed. By Euzoius of Antioch, Valens was stirred up to oppose Peter; and Lucius, whom Jovian had so contemptuously rejected, was introduced by the power of the sword. Then † was seen the insolent cruelty of Magnus a Pagan, whom the mercy of Jovian had spared. Many Athanasians were murdered, and many treated with great

* See Du Pin's view of his works.

† Theod. IV. 22.

outrages ; while Arianism, supported by the civil powers, triumphed without control. Nineteen priests and deacons, some very old, were seized by Magnus. “ Agree, wretches,” said the Pagan, “ to the sentiments of the Arians. If your religion be true, God will forgive you for yielding to necessity.” “ Forbear to importune us,” they replied, “ we do not believe that God is sometimes Father, and sometimes not. Our fathers at Nice confessed, that the Son is consubstantial with the Father.” Whips and tortures, the grief of the godly, and the insults of Jews and apostates, altered not their determination : they were banished to Heliopolis in Phœnicia. Palladius a Pagan, the governor of Egypt, sent many to prison, who had presumed to weep ; and after he had scourged them, sent twenty-three of them, chiefly monks, to work in the mines. Other scenes of savage cruelty are related ; it is tedious and unpleasant to enlarge on them : but it is a pleasure to behold the fruits of Athanasius’s labours in the faithful sufferings of so many of his followers. Euzoius, having put Lucius and his Arians into the possession of the churches, and left Alexandria in tears, returned to Antioch. What a bishop was this ! But the Christian reader will steadily observe with me, that Christ had all along a real church, and that the cross is her mark, but the cross meekly endured : and were not Euzoius’s conduct connected with this truth, his name would deserve no notice in this history.

The monks of Egypt, whose piety moved the common people, were courted by the Arian party ; but they offered their necks to the sword, rather than quit the Nicene profession. A number of these were banished, but were afterwards permitted to return *. Peter himself, though imprisoned, found means to escape, and in Europe, where Arianism had no power, he enjoyed a quiet exile.

* Sozom. VI. 20.

The piety of Terentius, an officer of Valens, deserves to be recorded. The emperor, pleased with his services, bade him ask a favour. The man begged the liberty of a place of worship for the orthodox. Valens in a rage tore his petition. Terentius gathering the fragments of the petition, said, I have received a gift, from you, O Emperor. Let the Judge of all the earth judge between us*.

At the same time among the Goths, by the cruelty of their king Athanaric, numbers of godly men were murdered for the sake of their Redeemer. Eusebius of Samosata was expelled by the Arian tyranny from his see. He took particular care to preserve the life of the imperial messenger before his departure, and when desired with floods of tears by his flock not to leave them to the mercy of the wolves, he read to them that passage of the Apostle, which commands obedience to the powers that be †. Excellent servant of Christ !

Eusebius of Samosata is one of those bishops, of whom it were to be wished we had a more distinct account. His zeal had exposed him to this persecution. In the disguise of a soldier he had travelled through various parts of the East, to confirm the desolate churches, and to supply them with pastors. When the messenger of his banishment came to him, " Conceal the occasion of your journey," says he, " or you will be thrown into the river, and your death laid to my charge." He himself retired with great secrecy, yet was he followed by the people. The testimony he gave of the primitive duty of passiveness under injuries was much needed in these times, when men had too much forgotten to suffer with meekness. He received from his friends very little for his journey, though their liberality would have supplied him abundantly. He prayed and instructed the people, and then retired in peace.

* Cent. Magd.

† Rom. xiii.

It will be proper to finish here all that I can find concerning Eusebius which is material. In the time of Constantius he had been intrusted with the care of a decree of a council held at Antioch, which the Arian party afterwards persuaded Constantius to order him to deliver up. He justly observed, that what had been delivered by a synod, could only be returned by the authority of the same synod. Even a menace, that he should have his hand cut off, prevailed not with him. Constantius admired his fortitude, and desisted*. No wonder that the people of Samosata, after his exile under Valens, admiring a man so firm and sincere, refused to attend the religious instructions of the successor who was forced upon them; who being a man of a meek temper, took much pains to ingratiate himself with them, but in vain. Eunomius (that was his name) left them, because he could not gain their favour. The Arians put in his room one Lucius, who acted with more violence, and encouraged the secular power to persecute†. Eusebius however lived long enough to recover his see of Samosata after the death of Valens, and was at last killed with a tile by a zealous Arian woman in the town of Dolicha, whither he was come to ordain an orthodox pastor, the place being very hostile to the doctrine of the Trinity. He died in a very charitable spirit, insisting with his friends, that the woman should not be brought to justice on his account, and obliged them to swear that they would gratify him in this ‡.

Some further views of the church under Valens will appear in the lives of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, whom I studiously pass over for the present. Valens perished in a battle with the Goths in the year 378, after having reigned fourteen years.

Death of
Valens,
A. D.
378.

Valens, however, from whatever cause, a little before his death, recalled the exiled bishops. Lucius

* Theodoret, B. II. c. 32.

† Ib. B. IV. c. 15.

‡ Ib. V. c. 4.

was driven from Alexandria ; Peter recovered his see, and Arianism lost its external dominion a little before the death of its benefactor.

The Goths, who had settled on the Roman side of the Danube, in the dominions of Valens, were by the advice of Eudoxius, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, brought over to Arianism. Valens proposed that they should agree with him in doctrine ; but they declared, that they never would recede from the doctrine of their ancestors. Ulfila, the bishop of the whole nation, of whom more hereafter, was induced, by the presents and complaisance of Eudoxius, to attempt to draw them over to the emperor's doctrine ; and his argument, which I suppose he had from Eudoxius, was that it was only a verbal dispute. Hence the Gothic Christians continued to assert, that the Father was greater than the Son, but would not allow the Son to be a creature. Nor yet did they wholly depart from the faith of their ancestors. For Ulfila assured them, that there was no difference of doctrine at all, but that the rupture had arisen from a vain contention*.

CHAP. XII.

THE CHURCH UNDER VALENTINIAN—AMBROSE APPOINTED BISHOP OF MILAN.

LET us turn our eyes to a more cheerful prospect in the West ; in the East the only comfortable circumstance has been, that God left not himself without witness, but marked his real church by a number of faithful sufferers. Valentinian, the elder brother of Valens, made a law in the beginning of his reign, that no man should be compelled in

* Theodoret, end of B. IV.

religion*. He restrained, however, this general licence soon after, partly by seizing the revenues of the heathen temples, which the emperors annexed to their own patrimony, and partly by the prohibition of divinations and enchantments. On a representation of the governor of Greece, Achaia was allowed still to practise her heathenish follies. Other laws in favour of Christians followed †. One of the supposed oracles of Greece had declared that Christianity should last only 365 years in the world. This period was now expired, and the event had falsified the prediction. In other instances this emperor was very indulgent to the Pagans, who might see themselves, both in the East and West, treated with far more lenity and favour than the Church of Christ was in the East during the whole reign of the two brothers. Themistius, the Pagan philosopher, was struck with the cruelty of Valens; and while he insinuated that perhaps God was delighted with the diversity of sentiments in the world concerning him, he entreated the emperor not to persecute any longer. This is one instance of the illegitimate charity now so common in the world, which founds the principles of moderation on scepticism, instead of that divine love which is the glory of the Christian religion.

Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan, being opposed by Eusebius of Vercellæ, and by Hilary of Poitiers ‡, imposed on Valentinian by a dexterous use of those ambiguities of speech, in which the Arians all along excelled. Nor is it to be wondered

* Though the laws of Valentinian run both in his name and that of his brother, I speak of them as his laws exclusively, because it may fairly be presumed, that he was the principal agent.

† See Cave's Introduction, Sect. IV.

‡ I purposely avoid entering into details of the acts of this great man, as well as of some others, because their lives deserve to be considered as distinct articles.

at, that Valentinian should be deceived, since even to this day the patrons of Arianism, by largely dwelling on the perfections of the Son of God, with a cautious omission of the term consubstantial, in a similar way frequently prevail on many, who do not or will not understand the true grounds of the controversy, to suppose that the difference of opinion is merely verbal. Hilary contended, that if this were really the case, the Arians could have no reason to avoid an explicit acknowledgment of the whole truth. To this it may justly be added, that their constant support of those who were undoubted opposers of the divinity of Jesus, and their constant enmity against its explicit defenders, evince the difference to be real, not imaginary; and so it will be felt by every one who feels the worth of his soul, and is forced to see the difference between committing its salvation to the Creator and the creature. With equal justice Hilary complained of the Arian method of supporting their creed by military and imperial power. But he complained in vain; the duplicity of Auxentius prevailed, and he was suffered to continue at Milan in the practice of undermining the faith without openly attacking it; the constant method of heresy in all ages. Whereas divine truth speaks directly and plainly, and must do so whatever be the consequence. And in this sincerity the church must continue to the end, supported not by political arts, but by divine influence. In the year 366, died Liberius of Rome. How far he really recovered from his fall under Constantius, is not very apparent. He was succeeded by Damasus, who however was not established in his see without a contest with Ursinus, which cost a number of lives. So much were Christian bishops degenerated. But it should be observed, that there was a material difference in these times between pastors of great cities and

Liberius,
bishop of
Rome, dies,
A. D.
366.

those of smaller. What I mean, is well illustrated by Ammianus *. “When I consider,” says he, “the magnificence and grandeur of Rome, I do not deny, but that those who are ambitious of this dignity, ought to use all their endeavours to arrive at it; since they by this means procure a certain settlement, where they are enriched by the offerings of the ladies: they ride in chariots richly clothed; and feast so splendidly, that their tables surpass even those of kings. They might be truly happy, if contemning the splendour of Rome, they lived like some bishops of the provinces, who by the plainness of their diet, their mean apparel, and the modesty of their looks, which are turned towards the ground, make themselves acceptable to the eternal God and his true worshippers.”

Thus far this sensible and candid Pagan, who by the concluding part of the passage appears to have imbibed some Christian notions, and to support that mongrel character, which I have elsewhere attributed to him. While we lament how full history is of these splendid and opulent bishops, and how scanty our materials are concerning the humble and obscure ones, it behoves us to be on our guard against the malignant intimations of profane historians, who represent the church in these times as altogether corrupt. It was very much so at Rome, at Antioch, at Constantinople, and other large cities, especially among the great and the rich. In the story of these, we see continually what an enemy riches are to the divine life. But among the lower orders, and in obscure places, by the confession of Ammianus, upright and exemplary pastors were not wanting; and if we had an historical view of their labours and success, I doubt not but the Church of Christ, even in the fourth century, would be seen with other eyes than it is by many.

I am endeavouring to catch the features of this

* Fleury, B. XVI. 8.

Valens'
edict
against
unlawful
assemblies,

A. D.
374.

Church, wherever I can find them in this obscure region. I have distinguished formerly three species of dissenters ; the Novatians, the Meletians and the Donatists. The first are by far the most respectable : of the second little is known, and that little is not to their credit : the third are flagitious, by the confession of all writers. A fourth appears, the Luciferians, who, if they imbibed the spirit of Lucifer, must have been firm and sincere in the love of the truth. In the year 374, the emperor ordered all who held unlawful assemblies to be banished an hundred miles from Rome. In prosecution of this edict, Damasus seems to have caused a Luciferian presbyter to be apprehended, who held a congregation by night in a private house ; and he and some of the same class were banished. Notwithstanding this severity, Damasus could not prevent these dissenters from having a bishop of their own at Rome, called Aurelius, who was succeeded by Ephesus, who also kept his station at Rome, notwithstanding the endeavours of Damasus to remove him. Gregory of Elvira in Spain was another of their bishops, a man whose firmness was extolled by Eusebius of Vercellæ. The Donatists had likewise a bishop at Rome, and another in Spain. But violence and ferocity still mark this people*.

I have represented as fairly as I could the lights of history. The reader may judge for himself, whether in the general church, we do not seem to behold the first and most dignified rulers degenerated. Damasus, orthodox and violent in the support of orthodoxy, without humility and piety, is as strong a contrast to the primitive bishops, as Sharp, archbishop of St. Andrew's, in the time of Charles II. is to our first reformers. The persecuted Luciferians may seem to resemble the Puritans of the same period ; while such men as Eusebius of Vercellæ, and Hilary of Poitiers, may be likened to archbishop Leighton.

* Fleury, B. XVI. 37.

But though the spirit of the Gospel probably prevailed most among the Luciferians, yet, as I have already observed, this spirit was still in a degree preserved among the inferior and obscure pastors of the general church. But a new star is going to appear in the Western world, and it behoves us to attend to its lustre.

Ambrose succeeded the Arian Auxentius at Milan, who died in the year 374. He was born about the year 338, while his father was the emperor's lieutenant in France. He was the youngest of three children, Marcellina and Satyrus being born before him. After his father's decease*, his mother with the family returned to Rome, where he made himself master of all the learning that Greece and Latium could afford; at the same time his sister Marcellina, who had devoted herself to a state of virginity, instructed him with much success in the principles of godliness. Being grown to maturity, he pleaded causes with so much dexterity, that he was soon taken notice of by Anicius Probus, pretorian prefect of Italy, who made choice of him to be of his council: and having authority to appoint governors to several provinces, when he gave a commission to him, he said, "Go, and govern more like a bishop than a judge." Ambrose in this office resided at Milan for five years, and was renowned for prudence and justice; when one of those sudden turns of providence, which are so conspicuous in the lives of many persons of eminent godliness, threw him into a course of life extremely different from his former.

Auxentius,
bishop of
Milan, dies,
A. D.
374.

Auxentius, by artifice and dexterity had, as we have seen, imposed on Valentinian, and preserved his seat to his death in the year 374. Immediately the bishops of the province met together concerning the election of a successor. The emperor sent for

* See Paulinus's Life of Ambrose, prefixed to the works of that Saint. Clave; Fleury.

them, and told them, that they, as men best acquainted with the sacred volume, ought to understand better than he the qualifications necessary for so important a station. "Choose a man," said he, "fit to instruct by life as well as by doctrine, and we ourselves will readily submit our sceptres to his counsels and direction, and, as men obnoxious to human frailty, will receive his reproofs and admonitions as wholesome physic." The bishops besought him to nominate the person, but Valentinian was resolute in referring the determination to them, as fitter than himself to decide*. In the mean time factions were strong, and the Arian party vigorously laboured to provide a successor worthy of Auxentius. The city was divided, every thing tended toward a tumult, the bishops were consulting, and Ambrose, hearing of these things, hastened to the church of Milan, and exhorted the people to peace and submission to the laws. His speech being finished, an infant's voice was heard in the crowd, "Ambrose is bishop!" The hint was taken at once, the whole assembly cried out, "Ambrose shall be the man!" The factions agreed immediately†, and he whom secular pursuits had seemed to preclude from the notice of either party, was suddenly elected by universal consent.

Ambrose
made bi-
shop of
Milan.

Ambrose was astonished, and peremptorily refused; nor was any person ever more desirous to obtain the office of a bishop than he was to avoid it. He even used methods which sound strange in our ears, and are by no means justifiable. By exercising severity on malefactors, and by encouraging

* Those who have learnt from modern politics to exclude men of the sacred office from any regard in the councils of princes, will despise the weakness of Valentinian. Those who remember how useful the advice of Jehoiada was to Joash, and who believe that piety and the fear of God are of some consequence in the conduct of human affairs, will commend his conscientiousness and his modesty.

† Soc. B. IV. 30. Soz. B. VI. 24.

harlots to come into his house, he took pains to convince them, that he was not that character of mildness and chastity, which he undoubtedly was, and which all believed him to be. This extraordinary hypocrisy was, however, easily detected. Finding it was vain to stem the torrent, he stole out of Milan at midnight, but missing his way, and wandering all night, he found himself in the morning at the gate of Milan. A guard was placed about his person, till the emperor's pleasure should be known, because his consent was necessary to part with a subject in office. Valentinian sincerely consented; and the consent of Ambrose himself alone was wanting. It is pleasing to see the testimony which the human mind, when left to itself, in all ages, gives in favour of modesty and integrity, in consequence of the law written on the heart, which all the corruption of nature and the artifice of Satan cannot easily efface. Ambrose again made his escape, and hid himself in the country-house of a friend. A menacing edict of the emperor brought him again to Milan, because he dared not expose his friend to the resentment of the emperor. Ambrose yielded at length, and Valentinian gave thanks to God and our Saviour, that it had pleased him to make choice of the very person to take care of men's souls, whom he had himself before appointed to preside over their temporal concerns. Valentinian received his general admonitions with reverence; and in particular, hearing him represent the faults of some in authority with great plainness: "I knew," said the emperor, "the honesty of your character before this time, yet I consented to your ordination; follow the divine rules, and cure the maladies into which we are prone to fall."

Ambrose was then about thirty-six years old. Immediately he gave to the church and to the poor all the gold and silver which he had. He gave also his lands to the church, reserving the annual income

of them for the use of his sister Marcellina. His family he committed to the care of his brother Satyrus. Thus disengaged from temporal concerns, he gave up himself wholly to the ministry. Having read little else than profane authors, he first applied himself to the study of the Scriptures. Whatever time he could spare from business he devoted to reading: and this he continued to do after he had attained a good degree of knowledge*. I wish Origen had been less the object of his study. But the renown of that Father was great, and this was not an age of evangelical perspicuity. His public labours went hand in hand with his studies. He preached every Lord's day. Arianism through his labours was expelled from Italy.

There was a presbyter of Rome, named Simplician, a man of eminent learning and piety, whom he drew over to Milan, and under whose tuition he improved in theology. For his knowledge must have been very confined when he entered upon his office, and what is very rare, he knew it to be so. Simplician he ever loved and revered. We shall hear again of this presbyter, when we come to the conversion of Augustine. It pleased God to make him a useful instrument for the instruction of both these luminaries of the Western church, and as he out-lived Ambrose, though very old, he was appointed his successor in the church of Milan. From Simplician, as an instrument, it pleased God successively to convey both to Ambrose and to Augustine that fire of divine love and genuine simplicity in religion, which had very much decayed since the days of Cyprian: and in this slow, but effectual method, the Lord was preparing the way for another great effusion of his Spirit. Ambrose now gave himself wholly to the work of the Lord, and restored purity of doctrine and discipline.

A council of bishops held about this time at

* Aug. Confess. B. VI. c. 3.

Valence, may deserve to be mentioned, on account of one of its rules, which throws some light on the religious state of the times. One Acceptus having been demanded as bishop by the church of Frejus, and having falsely accused himself of some great crime to prevent his ordination, the fathers of the council say, that to cut off occasions of scandal from the profane, they had determined, that the testimony which every one gives of himself shall be treated as true, though they were not ignorant that many had acted in this manner, in order to avoid the priesthood. The deceit of Ambrose, in endeavouring to appear what he was not, seems then to have been no singular case. Modesty, tinged with superstition, was a characteristic of the best characters of this age. Evangelical light being dim, the spirit of bondage much prevailed among real saints. Let us be thankful for the clearer light of divine truth, which now shines in the church, and that a good man may enter into holy orders without that excess of fear, which prevailed over Ambrose and Acceptus. But while we wonder that men could use such marvellous arts of falsehood, through modesty and conscientious awe, let us not forget that a future age may be as much astonished at the fearless spirit, with which such numbers can, in our days, rush into the Church of Christ, with no other views than those of this world; and let us bewail their intrepid audacity, while we smile at the superstitious simplicity of the age which we are now reviewing.

Valentinian died in the year 375, after a reign of eleven years; survived by his brother Valens about three years. Violent anger had ever been his predominant evil, and a fit of passion at length cost him his life. Of some men we must say with the Apostle, that their sins follow after, while others evidence in this life what they are. Of the former dubious sort seems to have been the emperor

Death of
Valentinian,
A. D.
375.

Valentinian. Fierce and savage by nature, though of excellent understanding, and when cool, of the soundest judgment, we have seen him modestly submitting himself to the judgment of bishops in divine things, and also zealous in religion, so far as his knowledge would permit, which seems to have been very small. We are astonished to behold the imperious lion turned into a gentle lamb ; and the best use to be made of his character is, to prove how extremely beneficial it is to human society, that princes should be men of some religion. Without this check, Valentinian might have been one of the worst of tyrants ; but by the sole means of religion he passes for one of the better sort of princes.

C H A P. XIII.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST UNDER GRATIAN AND THEODOSIUS, TILL THE DEATH OF THE FORMER.

GRATIAN, the elder son of Valentinian, succeeded him in Gaul, Spain, and Britain. His younger son, an infant, succeeded in Italy, and the rest of the Western world. And some time after Gratian chose Theodosius as his colleague, who reigned in the East.

From his early years there appear unquestionable marks of real godliness in Gratian, to a degree beyond any thing that has yet been seen in any Roman emperor. One of his first actions demonstrates it. The title of high-priest always belonged to the Roman princes. He justly observed, that as its whole nature was idolatrous, it become not a Christian to assume it. He therefore refused the habit, though the Pagans still gave him the title.

As he was destitute of that ambition which Roman pride had ever indulged, he chose a colleague,

for the East, of great abilities, purely for the good of the states, and managed the concerns of his infant brother at Rome with the affection of a father. There, from the beginning of his reign, Gracchus* the prefect, as yet only a catechumen, laboured earnestly to subdue idolatry. The mind of this young prince being strongly fixed on divine things, and being conscious of ignorance, he wrote to Ambrose of Milan to this effect†: “Gratian Augustus to Ambrose the religious priest of Almighty God. I much desire to be present in body with him whom I remember absent, and with whom I am united in mind. Come to me immediately, holy priest, that you may teach the doctrine of salvation to one who truly believes; not that he may study for contention, or seek to embrace God rather verbally than mentally, but that the revelation of the Divinity may dwell more intimately in my breast. For He whom I do not deny, whom I own as my Lord and my God, will not fail to teach me. I would not conceive so meanly of him as to make him a mere creature like myself, who own that I can add nothing to Christ. And yet while I seek to please the Father in celebrating the Son, I do not fear lest the Father should envy the honours ascribed to his Son; nor do I think so highly of my powers of commendation, as to suppose that I can increase the Divinity by my words. I am weak and frail, I extol him as I can, not as the Divinity deserves. With respect to that treatise which you gave me, I beg you would make additions to it by scriptural arguments, to prove the proper Deity of the Holy Ghost.” Ambrose, delighted with the vein of serious attention to divine subjects, which appears in this letter, answered him in an ecstasy of satisfaction.—“Most Christian prince,” says he, “modesty, not want of affection, has hitherto prevented me from waiting upon you. If, however, I was not with you personally, I have been present

* Fleury, B. XVIII. 24. † Ambrose's Epistles, B. V. 25, 26.

with my prayers, in which consists still more the duty of a pastor. I use no flattery : you need it not ; and moreover it is quite foreign to my office. Our Judge, whom you confess, and in whom you piously believe, knows that my bowels are refreshed with your faith, your salvation, and your glory ; and that I pray for you not only as in public duty bound, but even with personal affection.—He alone hath taught you, who said, He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father.” Toward the close, he reminds him, that his own arguments for the divinity of the Son, expressed in his letter, are equally conclusive for the divinity of the Holy Ghost, whom we ought not to think the Father to envy, nor ourselves to be on an equal footing with him, who are mere creatures. Some writings of Ambrose remain to us as the consequence of Gratian’s request.

The errors of good men have in some instances proved prejudicial to the church. This was unhappily the case with Ambrose. All the world bore testimony to his sincerity, charity, and piety : but he had not strength to withstand the torrent of superstition, which for some time had been growing. He even augmented it by his immoderate encomiums on virginity. The little acquaintance he had with the Scriptures before his ordination, and the influence of his sister Marcellina, a zealous devotee, will account for this. He wrote treatises on the subject: he reduced the rules of it to a sort of system, and exposed himself to the ill-will of parents, by inducing a considerable number of young women to follow them. It must be confessed, however, that he taught the essentials of Christian faith and love, and built his WOOD, HAY, AND STUBBLE * on the true foundation. He had no other arms but those of persuasion, and his great success showed the piety, as well as superstition of many of the female sex †.

Another part of his conduct was more worthy of

* 1 Cor. iii. 12.

† Paulinus’s Life of Ambrose.

his understanding. The ravages of the Goths gave him an opportunity to exercise his liberality. He scrupled not to apply the vessels of the church to the redemption of captives, and vindicated himself against those who censured his conduct*. In the instruction of catechumens he employed so much pains, that five bishops could scarcely go through so much labour as he alone. At Sirmium in Illyricum, the Arian bishop Photinus had caused a wide departure from the faith : and there being a vacancy in the year 379, Ambrose was sent for to attend the election of a new bishop. The empress Justina, mother of young Valentinian, resided there at that time†. She had conceived a predilection for Arianism, and endeavoured by her authority and influence to expel Ambrose from the church. He continued, however, in his tribunal though insulted and harassed by the mob. An Arian woman, particularly, had the impudence to lay hold of his habit, and attempt to draw him among the women, who intended to drag him out of the church. “ Though I am unworthy of the priesthood,” said he, “ it does not become you to lay hands on a pastor ; you ought to fear the judgment of God.” It is remarkable, that she died the next day. The minds of men were struck with awe, and Artemius, an orthodox minister, was elected without molestation. Another story of the same kind deserves to be mentioned here. Two courtiers of the emperor Gratian, being Arians, came to Ambrose, and desired him to preach on our Lord’s Incarnation, promising that they would come to hear him the next day. But they, meaning nothing except ridicule and scorn, took their horses, and rode out of town. It is remarkable, that they were both thrown from their horses, and perished. The congregation in the mean time growing impatient under the delay, Ambrose went up into the

* Ambrose de Virgin. 3 books. 11 Offic. Amb.

† Paulinus.

pulpit, and told them that he was come to pay his debt, but found not his yesterday's creditors to receive it; and then preached on the subject*. Those, with whom one sort of doctrine is as valuable as another, will feel themselves little disposed to relish or believe stories of this kind. But the laws of history require that, where such remarkable facts seem unquestionable, they should not be suppressed, whatever inferences men may choose to draw from them. The humility and piety connected with the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity are well understood by every Christian. But the foundation was here laid for the enmity of Justina, which afterwards brake out against Ambrose in a remarkable manner. At Antioch Meletius was now restored, and the churches which had long been afflicted, recovered breath. Constantinople for forty years had been in subjection to Arian impiety and tyranny. By this time few remained in this great city who knew any thing scriptural; truth and godliness had fled; the times were, however, now favourable for the recovery of the profession of the Gospel, and Gregory of Nazianzum was appointed for this purpose. He found the city in a state little removed from heathenism.

Orthodoxy
of
Theodosius,
A. D.
380.

In the year 380, Theodosius, desirous of co-operating with Gregory and other zealous pastors in the revival of Christianity in the East, published a law, by which he reprobated the heresy of Arius, and expressed his warm approbation of the Nicene faith. He gave notice to Demophilus, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, to embrace the Nicene creed, to unite the people, and to live in peace. Demophilus rejecting his proposal, the emperor ordered him to give up the churches. "If they persecute us in one city," said the heresiarch to the people of his communion, "our Master orders us to flee to another. To-morrow, therefore, I purpose to

* Paulinus's Life of Ambrose.

hold our assemblies without the city." He found, however, little encouragement to proceed, and afterwards retired to Beræ, where he died six years after. Thus within forty years from the time that Eusebius of Nicomedia was violently intruded into Constantinople in the room of Paul, the sacred places were restored to the Church of Christ. For so I shall venture to call the Trinitarians, however low and reduced the spirit of godliness was, especially in the East; not only because they held the doctrine of truth, but because whatever of the true spirit of the Gospel was found any where, rested with them. If the reader recollect the barbarities exercised on Paul, and the cruel conduct of the Arians, while in power, he will be struck with the difference between Theodosius and Gregory on one side, and Constantius and Eusebius on the other. I am far from undertaking to vindicate all the proceedings of the patrons of the Nicene faith; but undoubtedly their conduct was full of patience and meekness, compared with that of their opponents. Constantinople was not now made a scene of carnage and violence. Men who fear God will exercise their secular prosperity in religion only to defend the truth, not to persecute its foes. And this is another instance, to be added to the many, which have appeared, of the connexion between Christian principles and holy practice.

Gregory being now confirmed in the see of Constantinople, the emperor called a council in that city, to settle the distracted state of the Eastern church. There came thither three hundred and fifty bishops. But it was found much easier to expel Arianism and corruption externally than internally. The council was very confused and disorderly, greatly inferior in piety and wisdom to that of Nice, though it be called the second general council. One of the holiest men there was Meletius of Antioch, who died at Constantinople. Gregory justly ob-

The second
General
Council
held at
Constantinople,
A. D.
381.

served, that as Paulinus was sound in the faith, and of unexceptionable character, there could now be no reason why the unhappy breach, so long continued in that church, should not at once be healed by confirming him in the succession. But faction was high, and charity was low at this time; he was overruled by the immoderate; and Flavian was constituted the successor of Meletius, as if they took pleasure in lengthening the reign of schism a little: for Paulinus was far advanced in years. In this affair the younger bishops had influenced the elder, though they could assign no better reason, than that finding the bishops of the West ready to support Gregory's opinion, they thought those of the East ought to prevail, because Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh had appeared in Asia, not in Europe. So easy is it in the decline of piety for Christian formalities to be preserved, while human depravity reigns in the temper and spirit. Gregory in disgust soon after gave up his see.

This council very accurately defined the doctrine of the Trinity, and enlarging a little the Nicene creed, they delivered it, as we now have it in our Communion Service. The Macedonian heresy, which blasphemed the Holy Ghost, gave occasion to a more explicit representation of the third Person in the Trinity, which, it must be owned, is there expressed with scriptural precision and clearness.

Two Arian
bishops
deposed at
Aquileia.

About the same time Palladius and Secundianus, two Arian bishops, and the chief supporters of that heresy in the West, were condemned, in a council held at Aquileia, by the bishop of Milan, and were formally deposed. It is astonishing with what artificial dexterity Palladius evaded the plain and direct interrogatories of Ambrose*, and while he seemed to honour the Son of God in the same manner as others, and to reduce the contest to a verbal dispute, he still reserved the distinguishing

* Fleury, B. XVIII. 10.

point of Arius. A subtilty ever practised by these heretics !

Theodosius, earnestly desirous to reduce all who professed the Christian name to an uniformity, once more attempted to unite them by a conference at Constantinople. But where the heart was not the same, it appeared that outward conformity produced only hypocrisy. The Novatians alone agreed cordially with the general church in sentiment. And Nectarius, the new created bishop of Constantinople, lived on a friendly footing with Agelius their bishop, a man of piety and of the first character*. In consequence of this, these dissenters obtained from the emperor as ample a toleration as could reasonably be desired. Heavy and tyrannical penalties were denounced in edicts against the rest, which, however, do not appear to have been executed. The denunciation of them itself was however wrong; though it must be owned, it proceeded from the best intentions on the side of Theodosius, who actually put none of his penal laws against sectaries into execution, and meant only to induce all men to speak alike in the church. How much better, to have taken pains in promoting the propagation of the Gospel itself by the encouragement of zealous pastors, and to have given up the zeal for a chimera of no value, a pretended union without the reality !

In the year 383, Amphilocus, bishop of Iconium, coming to court with other bishops, paid the usual respects to the emperor, but took no notice of his son Arcadius, about six years old, who was near the father. Theodosius bad him salute his son. Amphilochus drew near, and stroking him, said, "God save you, my child." The emperor in anger ordered the old man to be driven from court; who with a loud voice declared, You cannot bear to have your son contemned; be assured, that God in like manner is offended with those who honour not his Son as

The bishop
of Iconium's
behaviour
at the em-
peror's
court,

A. D.
383.

* Socrates, B. V. c. 10.

Death of
Gratian,
A. D.
383.

himself*. The emperor was struck with the justness of the remark, and immediately made a law to prohibit the assemblies of the heretics.

In the same year the emperor Gratian lost his life by the rebellion of Maximus, who commanded in Britain. Deserted by his troops, Gratian fled towards Italy. He found the usual lot of the calamitous, a perfect want of friends; yet he might have escaped to the court of Milan, where his younger brother Valentinian reigned, if he had not been betrayed at Lyons. Adragathius invited him to a feast, and swore to him upon the Gospel. The sincere mind of Gratian, measuring others by himself, and as yet not knowing the world (for he was but twenty-four years of age) fell into the snare, and his murder was the consequence. All writers agree, that he was of the best disposition, and well skilled both in religious and secular learning. Ambrose had a peculiar affection for him, and on his account wrote a treatise concerning the Deity of the Holy Ghost. He tells us (and every thing that we know of him confirms the account) that he was godly from his tender years. Chaste, temperate, benevolent, conscientious, he shines in the Church of Christ; but talents for government he seems not to have possessed, and his indolence gave advantage to those who abused both himself and the public. Divine Providence in him hath given us a lesson, that Christ's kingdom is not of this world; even a prince unquestionably pious is denied the common advantage of a natural death†. When he was dying, he bemoaned the absence of Ambrose, and often spake of him‡.

* John v. 23.

† Fleury, B. XVIII. 27.

‡ A charitable action of Ambrose, though in opposition to Gratian's views, tended no doubt to raise his character in the eyes of that emperor. A pagan of some rank had spoken contemptuously of Gratian, had been arraigned, and condemned to die. Ambrose, compassionating his case, went to court, to intercede for his life. It was with great difficulty that he could procure admission into the royal presence, where he prevailed at length,

Those who have received benefit from a pastor in divine things, have often an affection for him, of which the world has no idea. The last movements of a saint are absorbed in divine things, compared with which, the loss of empire weighed as nothing in the mind of Gratian.

C H A P. XIV.

THE HERESY OF PRISCILLIAN—THE CONDUCT OF MARTIN—THE PROGRESS OF SUPERSTITION.

I JOIN these subjects together, to connect the ecclesiastical information of Sulpitius Severus, an historian who belongs to this period, an Aquitanian of great learning, and who wrote a summary of Church history, which he extended to his own times. What he records of transactions which passed within his own memory, and also what he collected by information of other parts of the empire, may deserve to be very briefly reviewed. Very little shall we find adapted to our purpose; the deep decline of evangelical purity will be the chief discovery we shall make: and he will thus make my apology for evidencing so little of the spirit of Christianity at this period, because so little is to be found.

The Priscillianists, a heretical sect, who seem to have combined all the most pernicious heresies of former times, had already appeared in the time of Gratian, and infected the greatest part of Spain. Priscillian himself, whose character is described by the classical pen of Sulpitius with much elegance and energy*, was exactly fitted for the office which

by his importunate solicitations, and saved the life of the condemned person.

* Sulp. Sev. p. 419.

he filled: learned, eloquent, factious, acute, of great powers both of body and mind, and by a spurious modesty and gravity of manners, extremely well qualified to maintain an ascendancy over weak and credulous spirits. Idacius and Ithacius, the one an aged presbyter, the other bishop of Sossuba, applied to the secular power, in order that, by the decrees of the magistrates, the heretics might be expelled from the cities. The Priscillianists endeavoured to gain friends in Italy; but their corruptions were too glaring to procure them any countenance either from Damasus of Rome, or from Ambrose of Milan.

On the death of Gratian, Maximus the usurper entered victorious into Treves. While Ithacius earnestly pressed him against the Priscillianists, the heresiarch himself appealed to Maximus, who took upon himself the office of deciding. Sulpitius very properly observes, that both parties were highly culpable; the heretics in spreading notions entirely subversive of Christianity, and their accusers in subserving only their own factious and selfish views.

In the mean time, Martin bishop of Tours, blamed Ithacius for bringing the heretics as criminals before the emperor, and entreated Maximus to abstain from the blood of the unhappy men: he said, it was abundantly sufficient, that having been judged heretics by the sentence of the bishops, they were expelled from the churches, and that it was a new and unheard evil, for a secular judge to interfere in matters purely ecclesiastical. These were Christian sentiments; and deserve to be here mentioned, as describing an honest, though unsuccessful resistance made to the first attempt, which appeared in the church, of punishing heresy with death. I scarcely know any thing more disagreeable to the spirit of a really good man, than to think of punishing capitally, on account of their irreligion, persons who (as he is constrained to believe) are walking the broad road

to eternal destruction. He has no need to enter into the political arguments against persecution, which are fashionable in the mouths of infidels. He has much more weighty reasons against it, drawn from the genius of his own religion. To do what in him lies to prevent the conversion of a sinner by shortening his days—how contrary is this to the spirit of Him, who came not to destroy men's lives but to save them!

Yet there were found men at this time capable of such enormity, and it marks the degeneracy of the age. But Christ had still a church in the West, and Martin persevered with such pious zeal in opposing the hitherto unheard-of innovations, and was himself so much respected for his piety and integrity, that he prevailed at first, and the usurper promised, that he would not proceed to blood against the heretics. Two bishops, Magnus and Rufus, however, changed his resolution afterwards, and he referred the cause to Euodius the prefect, who, after he had found them guilty, (and they appear to have been defiled with all the impurities of the ancient Gnostics) committed them to custody, and referred them again to the emperor. Priscillian in the issue was put to death, and four other leaders of his sect. A few more were condemned to die, or to be banished. The heresy was not extinguished by this means; for fifteen years after, the contention was extreme between the parties; Priscillian was honoured as a martyr: Christianity never received a greater scandal, though, like all the rest, underserved, from the mouth of its enemies; and men, who feared God, and loved moderation and charity, wept and prayed in secret, despised and disregarded by the two parties, who trampled on all the rules of godliness. In the mean time the selfish and worldly passions triumphed in Spain, and though the form of orthodoxy prevailed, it was evident, that the power was reduced almost to the brink of destruction.

Priscillian
and four
others put
to death,

A. D.

384.

Let us attend to our business, and catch the face

of the Church of Christ, if we can. We see her in Ambrose, who, coming to Maximus on an embassy from the younger Valentinian, refused to hold communion with his bishops, who had been concerned in the deaths of the heretics. Maximus, enraged, ordered him to withdraw. Ambrose entered upon his journey very readily, being only grieved to find an old bishop, Hyginus, dragged into exile, though it was evident that he was very near his end. The generous bishop of Milan applied to some of the courtiers, to furnish him with conveniences *, but in vain. A number of holy men, who protested against these barbarities, were themselves aspersed with the charge of heresy, and among the rest Martin of Tours. Thus in Gaul and Spain there were three parties; first, the Priscillianists, men void of godliness evidently, and bearing the Christian name to disgrace it with a complication of heresies; secondly, men of formal orthodoxy, who persecuted the Priscillianists even to death, and ruined them as a sect, at the same time that they themselves disgraced the Gospel by a life of avarice, faction, and ambition; and thirdly, men who feared God and served him in the Gospel of his Son, condemning the principles of the former by argument only, and the practices of the latter by their meek and charitable conduct. A division of men, not uncommon in the Church of Christ; but let it be remembered, that the last sort are the true branches of the mystical vine, and that they only are to be regarded as belonging to our history.

Martin was born at Ticinum in Italy, and in his youth had served in the army under Constantius and Julian; but against his will. His father, by profession a soldier, had compelled him. For he himself, when only ten years old, went to the church, and gave in his name as a catechumen †. At twelve he had a desire to lead a monastic life. But being compelled to serve in the army, he was remarkable for his

* Ambrose, Ep. 27.

† A candidate for baptism.

exemption from military vices, his liberality to the poor, and his reservation of nothing for himself out of the pay which he received, except what was necessary for daily food. At eighteen he was baptized, and two years afterwards left the army. Some time after, falling into the hands of robbers among the Alps, he was delivered bound to one of them to be plundered, who, leading him to a retired place, asked him, who he was. He answered, "I am a Christian." "Are not you afraid?" "I never was more at ease, because I know the mercy of the Lord to be most present in trials : I am more concerned for you, who by your course of life render yourself unfit to partake of the mercy of Christ." And entering into the argument of religion, he preached the Gospel to the robber. The man believed, attended his instructor to the road, and begged his prayers. The new convert persevered in godliness ; and this relation is taken from the biographical account of Martin*.

I must be brief in following our author through other parts of the life of his hero. It was an age of childish credulity ; the human mind was sinking fast into ignorance and superstition. The Christian fathers and historians relate things extremely absurd ; but this was the fault of the times, not of religion. The Pagan writers, their contemporaries, are no way their superiors. Few stories told by Sulpitius are so good in their matter, and so authentic in their foundation as this of the robber. It was with difficulty that Martin was at length prevailed on to quit his monastery, and become bishop of Tours, to which office the universal voice of the people called him. He still preserved his monastic taste, and had a monastery two miles out of the city. Here he lived with eighty disciples, who followed his example ; they lived in common with extreme austerity. The celebrity of his supposed miracles had a mighty effect on the ignorant Gauls ; every common action

* Sulp. vitæ Martin.

of his was magnified into a prodigy ; heathen temples were destroyed, and churches and monasteries arose in their stead.

Maximus courted the friendship of Martin in vain, who honestly owned, that he could not countenance a murderer and usurper. Maximus pleaded necessity, the providence of God, and that he had slain none except in the field. Overcome at length by importunities, the bishop supped with the usurper. A servant offered the cup to Maximus, who directed him to give it to Martin, expecting and desiring to pledge him. The bishop disappointed his hopes; and gave it to his presbyter.

Wonderful is the account which Sulpitius gives of his patience and charity. But he speaks with partial affection, as of a friend, who in his eyes was faultless. The Scripture does not colour the characters of saints so highly ; and I have no ambition to imitate Sulpitius. Many evils attend this spirit of exaggeration. The excessive admiration of men takes off the mind from looking to Jesus, the true and only Mediator. Sulpitius himself professes his hope of obtaining much good through the intercession of his deceased friend. What at first were only the more unguarded effusions of friendship, became at last habits of self-righteous superstition ; and one of the worst corruptions of religion was this way gradually introduced, and in the end too firmly established.

Maximus, whatever were his motives, paid assiduous court to Martin, and together with his wife heard him discourse of divine things. She indeed seems to have admired him sincerely, and asked her husband's consent, that she might be allowed as a servant to attend upon him at supper. It was done accordingly ; and our author compares her on this account to the queen of Sheba. In these transactions we may mark the progress of superstition.

The integrity of Martin appears very conspicuous in opposing the tyranny of Maximus. The latter strove in vain to reconcile him to the maxims of his government in the capital punishment of the Priscillianists and endeavoured to persuade him to communicate with the bishops, who had been urgent in their condemnation. Martin refused, till, understanding that some of the king's servants were going to put certain persons to death for whom he had interceded, in order to save their lives he consented to communicate with men whose conduct he abhorred. Even of this compliance he bitterly repented, guarded against any future communion with the party of Ithacius, and lived afterwards sixteen years in retirement.

On the whole, if less had been said of his miracles, and a more distinct view had been given of his virtues, Martin of Tours would, I believe, appear among us far more estimable. That he was pious, is unquestionable; that his piety was disfigured with monastic superstition exceedingly, is no less evident; but Europe and Asia now vied with each other in the promotion of false humility, and I should be ashamed, as well as think the labour ill spent, to recite the stories at length which Sulpitius gives us.

CHAP. XV.

THE CONDUCT OF AMBROSE UNDER THE EMPEROR VALENTINIAN THE SECOND, AND THE PERSECUTION WHICH HE ENDURED FROM THE EMPEROR'S MOTHER JUSTINA.

JUSTINA, the empress, was a decided patroness of Arianism. After the death of her husband, she began openly to season her son with her doctrine, and to induce him to menace the bishop of Milan.

CHAP.
XV.Ambrose
persecuted,A. D.
385.

Ambrose exhorted him to support the doctrine received from the Apostles. Young Valentinian, in a rage, ordered his guards to surround the church, and commanded Ambrose to come out of it. "I shall not willingly," replied the bishop, "give up the sheep of Christ to be devoured by wolves. You may use your swords and spears against me; such a death I shall freely undergo*." After this he was exposed to the various frauds and artifices of Justina, who feared to attack him openly. For the people were generally inclined to support the bishop; and his residence in the city where the court was held, at once increased his influence, and exercised his mind with a series of trials.

The Arians were not now the only adversaries of the Church; the Pagans themselves, taking advantage of the minority of Valentinian and the confusions of the empire, endeavoured to recover their ancient establishment. The Senate of Rome consisted still very much of Gentiles; and the pride of family granduer still induced the most noble to pique themselves on their constancy, and to scorn the innovations of Christianity. Symmachus, a man of learning and great powers of eloquence, headed the party, and endeavoured to persuade the emperor to suffer the altar of Victory to be restored to the Senate-house. Ambrose wrote to Valentinian, that it ill became the Gentiles to complain of their losses, who never spared the blood of Christians, and who refused them, under Julian, the common liberty of teaching. "If he is a Pagan who gives you this advice, let him give the same liberty, which he takes himself. You compel no man to worship what he does not approve. Here the whole Senate, so far as it is Christian, is endangered. Every senator takes his oath at the altar; every person who is obliged to appear before the senate upon oath, takes his oath in the same manner. The divinity

* Theodoret, B. V. c. 13.

of the false gods is evidently allowed by the practice. And Christians are obliged by these means to endure a persecution. But in matters of religion consult with God; and whatever men may say of injuries which they suffer, remember that you injure no man by preferring God Almighty before him*." We have still extant the address of Symmachus to the emperors on the subject in vindication of Pagan idolatry, in which he introduces Rome as a person complaining of the hardships to which she was exposed in her old age. We have also the reply of Ambrose, who introduces Rome observing, that it was not by the favour of these gods that she gained her victories. In answer to the complaint, which the Pagans made of the loss of their revenues, he observes, that the Gospel had increased by poverty and ill treatment, whereas riches and prosperity seemed necessary to the very existence of THEIR religion. And now that the Church has some wealth, he justly glories in the use she made of it, and challenges the Pagans to declare, what captives THEY had redeemed, what poor THEY had relieved, and to what exiles THEY had sent alms. But it is not necessary to enlarge on this subject. The advantage of the Christian cause in the promotion of liberality and benevolence among mankind, above all religions, is perhaps the only thing generally allowed even by infidels. Symmachus being foiled at present, renewed the same attempt before the emperor Theodosius, and was vanquished a second time by the eloquence and influence of Ambrose.

This prelate by his talents in negotiation at the court of Maximus averted for a time the invasion of Italy from the court of Milan. But nothing could move the mind of Justina in his favour. In the year 386, she procured a law to enable the Arian congregations to assemble without interruption.

Justina's
law.

A. D.
386.

Auxentius, a Scythian, of the same name with

* Epistle of Ambrose, 30.

the Arian predecessor of Ambrose, was now introduced, under the protection of the empress, into Milan. He challenged Ambrose to hold a disputation with him in the emperor's court; which occasioned the bishop to write to Valentinian, that it was no part of the emperor's business to decide in points of doctrine*. "Let him come to church," says he, "and upon hearing, let the people judge for themselves; and if they like Auxentius better, let them take him: but they have already declared their sentiments." More violent measures were now entered into, and the fortitude of Ambrose was tried in a manner which he had hitherto not experienced. Auxentius moved, that a party of soldiers might be sent to secure for himself the possession of the church called Basilica: and tribunes came to demand it, with the plate and vessels belonging to it. At the same time, there were those who represented, that it was an unreasonable thing, that the emperor should not be allowed to have one place of worship which was agreeable to his conscience. The language was specious, but deceitful. Justina and her son, if they had thought it prudent to exert their authority, might have commanded the use not of one only, but of all the churches: but the demand of the court was, that Ambrose should do what in conscience he could not, that he should, by his own deed, resign the church into Arian hands, which, as circumstances then stood, would have been to acknowledge, indirectly at least, the Arian creed. He therefore calmly answered the officers, that if the emperor had sent to demand his house or land, money or goods, he would have freely resigned them, but that he could not deliver that which was committed to his care. In the congregation he that day told the people†, that he would not willingly desert his right: that if compelled, he knew not how

* Epistle of Ambrose, 32.

† Orat. in Auseen. p. 159. Paris edition.

to resist. "I can grieve," says he, "I can weep, I can groan. Against arms and soldiers, tears are my arms. Such are the fortifications of a pastor. I neither can nor ought to resist in any other manner. Our Lord Jesus is Almighty; what he commands to be done shall be fulfilled, nor does it become you to resist the divine sentence." It seemed proper to state in his own words what his conduct was; and it appears, that he abated nothing of the maxims of passive submission to the civil power, which Christians had ever practised from the days of St. Paul; and that there is not the least ground to accuse Ambrose of disloyalty to his prince. He had served him already faithfully, and we shall see presently that he is again ready to expose himself to danger for his service. The court knew his principles, and seem not to have had the least fear that he should draw the people into a rebellion; but they wished to menace him into a degree of compliance with Arianism.

Ambrose during the suspension of this affair employed the people in singing divine hymns and psalms, at the end of which there was a solemn doxology to the honour of the Trinity. The method of responsive singing had been gradually practised in the East, and was introduced by Ambrose into Milan, whence it was propagated into all the churches. The people were much delighted, their zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity was inflamed, and one of the best judges in the world, who then lived at Milan, owns that his own soul was melted into divine affection on these occasions*.

The demands of the court were now increased: not only the Portian church which stood without the walls, but also the great church newly built within the city, were required to be given up. On the Lord's day after sermon, the catechumens being dismissed, Ambrose went to baptize those who were

* Aug. Conf. B. 9.

prepared for that ordinance, when he was told that officers were sent from the court to the Portian church : he went on, however, unmoved in the service, till he was told, that the people having met with Castulus an Arian presbyter in the street, had laid hands on him. Then with prayers and tears he besought God, that no man's blood might be shed, but rather his own, not only for the pious people, but also for the wicked. And he immediately sent some presbyters and deacons, who recovered Castulus safe from the tumult. The court enraged sent out warrants for apprehending several merchants and tradesmen ; men were put in chains, and vast sums of money were required to be paid in a little time, which many professed they would pay cheerfully, if they were suffered to enjoy the profession of their faith unmolested. By this time the prisons were full of tradesmen, and the magistrates and men of rank were severely threatened ; while the courtiers urged Ambrose with the imperial authority ; whom he answered with the same loyalty and firmness as before. The Holy Spirit, said he, in his exhortation to the people, has spoken in you this day, to this effect: EMPEROR, WE ENTREAT, BUT WE DO NOT FIGHT. The Arians, having few friends among the people, kept themselves within doors. A notary coming to the bishop from the emperor, asked him, whether he intended to usurp the empire? "I have an empire, says he, it is true, but it lies in weakness, according to that saying of the Apostle, 'when I am weak, then am I strong.' Even Maximus will clear me of this charge, since he will confess, it was through my embassy he was kept from the invasion of Italy." Wearied and overcome at length with his resolution, the court, who meant to obtain his consent, rather than to exercise violence, ordered the guards to leave the church, where the bishop had lodged all night ; the soldiers having guarded it so close, that none had been suffered to

go out ; and the people confined there having spent their time in singing psalms. The sums exacted of the tradesmen also were restored. Peace was made for the present, though Ambrose had still reason to fear for himself, and expressed his desire, in the epistle which he wrote to his sister Marcellina, that God would defend his church, and let its enemies rather satiate their rage with his blood*.

The spirit of devotion was kept up all this time among the people, and Ambrose was indefatigable both in praying and preaching. Being called on by the people to consecrate a new church, he told them, that he would, if he could find any relics of martyrs there. Let us not make the superstition of these times greater than it was. It was lamentably great ; enough to stain the piety with which it was mixed. We are told, that it had been revealed to him in a vision at night, in what place he might find the relics. But in the epistle which he writes on the subject, he says no such thing. He describes, however, the finding of the bodies of two martyrs, Protasius and Gervasius, the supposed miracles wrought on the occasion, the dedication of the church, the triumph of the orthodox, and the confusion of Arianism. Ambrose himself too much encouraged all this, and in a language which favoured the introduction of other intercessors besides the Lord Jesus Christ, whom yet it is evident he supremely loved, and trusted in for salvation. In all this, the candid and intelligent reader will see the conflict between godliness and superstition maintained in the church of Milan, both existing in some vigour, and each at present checking the growth of the other †.

The news of Maximus's intention to invade Italy arriving at this time, threw the court of Milan into the greatest trepidation. Again Justina implored the bishop to undertake an embassy to the usurper,

* Epis. 33.

† Ib. 85.

The tyrant
Maximus
defeated,
and killed
by Theodo-
sius,

A. D.
388.

Valentinian
sends for
Ambrose to
baptize him,

A. D.
392.

which he cheerfully undertook, and executed with great fortitude ; but it was not in his power to stop the progress of the enemy. Theodosius, who reigned in the East, coming at length to the assistance of Valentinian, put an end to the usurpation and the life of Maximus. By his means, the young emperor was induced to forsake his mother's principles, and in form at least to embrace those of Ambrose. Whether he was ever truly converted to God, is not so clear. That he was reconciled to Ambrose, and loved him highly, is certain : and in the year 392, in which he lost his life by a second usurpation in the West, he sent for Ambrose to come to baptize him. The bishop in his journey heard of his death, with which he was deeply affected, and wrote to Theodosius* concerning him with all the marks of sorrow, and composed a funeral oration in his praise. The rhetorical spirit usually exaggerates on these occasions ; but it is inconsistent with the unquestionable integrity of Ambrose to suppose, that he did not believe the real conversion of his royal pupil. The oration itself is by no means worthy of Ambrose ; the taste is vicious and affected. Indeed panegyric, when it has not an object of magnitude sufficient to fill the mind, is ever frigid and groveling, because it is continually affecting the sublime, but has not materials to support it with dignity.

CHAP. XVI.

THE CHURCH UNDER THEODOSIUS.

CHAP.
XVI.

It will be proper to look a little more particularly at the conduct of this prince towards the Church. He had been preserved in his younger years from the jealousy of Valens, who, by some superstition,

* Epist. 34. *and* de obitu Valentiniani.

had been led to suspect those, whose names began with THE, and to seek their destruction. After his exaltation to the empire from a private life by the generous and patriotic choice of Gratian, he reigned in the East, more vigorously supporting Christianity, according to his ideas of it, than any emperor before him. His sense of justice, however, determined him to order some Christians to rebuild at their own expense a Jewish synagogue, which they had tumultuously pulled down. I mention with concern, yet with historical veracity, that Ambrose prevailed on him to set aside this sentence, from a mistaken notion of piety, that Christianity should not be obliged to contribute to the erection of a Jewish synagogue. If the Jews were tolerated at all in the empire, the transaction ought certainly to have been looked on as a civil one. This is the first instance I recollect in which a good man was induced, by superstitious motives, to break the essential rules of justice ; and it marks the growth of superstition *. Nor is there any thing in the declamatory eloquence of Ambrose, which moves me to pass a different judgment.

The Luciferians still existing, entreated this emperor to grant them liberty of conscience ; confessing themselves to be Christians, and contending that it was wrong in others to give them a sectarian name ; at the same time declaring that they coveted not the riches and grandeur of other churches, and in their censures not sparing Hilary of Poitiers and Athanasius. These last were doubtless men of great uprightness and integrity. What they themselves were is not so evident as it were to be wished, because of the scantiness of information. They speak with extraordinary respect of Gregory, bishop of Elvira, as the chief of their communion ; a man doubtless of high estimation, because Theodosius himself admits it, and grants them a legal toleration. I have

* Epis. 29.

before spoken of this class of dissenters, among whom, I apprehend, it is probable, marks of the presence of God might be found, if their history had come down to us. But the reader who knows how slight our information of these things is, while church history dwells chiefly on what is scandalous, not what is excellent, will not be surprised at my silence. The sect itself vanished soon after.

Theodosius was of a passionate temper, and on a particular occasion was led by it to commit a barbarous action; the circumstances of the story will be the best comment on the character of this emperor, of Ambrose, and of the times. At Thessalonica a tumult was made by the populace, and the emperor's officer was murdered. The news was calculated to try the temper of Theodosius, who ordered the sword to be let loose upon them. Ambrose interceded, and the emperor promised to forgive. But the great officers of the court persuaded him to retract, and to sign a warrant for military execution. It was executed with great cruelty. Seven thousand were massacred in three hours, without trial, and without distinction!

Ambrose* wrote him a faithful letter, reminding him of the charge in the prophecy, that if the priest does not warn the wicked he shall be answerable for it†. "You discover a zeal," says he, "for the faith and fear of God, I own: but your temper is warm, soon to be appeased indeed, if endeavours are used to calm it; but if not regulated, it bears down all before it." He urges the example of David, and shows the impropriety of communicating with him at present. "I love you," says he, "I cherish you, I pray for you; but blame not me, if I give the preference to God." On these principles Ambrose refused to admit Theodosius into the church of Milan. The emperor pleaded the case of David: "Imitate him," says the zealous bishop, "in his

* Amb. Epis. 51.

† Ezek. iii. 18.

repentance, as well as in his sin." Theodosius submitted, and kept from the church eight months. On the feast of the nativity, he expressed his sorrow with sighs and tears in the presence of Ruffinus the master of the offices*. "I weep," said he, "that the temple of God, and consequently heaven, is shut from me, which is open to slaves and beggars." Ruffinus undertook to persuade the bishop to admit the emperor. Ambrose urged the impropriety of his rude interference, because Ruffinus, by his evil counsels, had been the author of the massacre. Ruffinus telling him, that the emperor was coming, "I will hinder him," says he, "from entering the vestibule; yet if he will play the king, I shall offer him my throat." Ruffinus returning, informed the emperor; "I will go, and receive the refusal which I desire," says he. And as he approached the bishop, he added, "I come to offer myself, to submit to what you prescribe." Ambrose enjoined him to do public penance, and to suspend the execution of capital warrants for thirty days in future, in order that the ill effects of intemperate anger might be prevented. The emperor pulling off his imperial robes, prayed prostrate on the pavement, nor did he put on those robes, till the time of his penance was expired. "My soul cleaveth to the dust," said he, "quicken thou me, according to thy word." The people prayed and wept with him, and he not only complied with the rules of penance, but retained visible marks of compunction and sadness during the rest of his life.

Let us make as candid an estimate, as we can, of this extraordinary affair: I say, as we can. Moderns hardly can be sufficiently candid; so different are our sentiments and views. It is certain that these rules of humiliation are too severe, too formal, and by no means properly calculated to instruct: the growth also of superstition, and the immoderate exercise of episcopal power, are both strikingly

* Theodoret, B. V. c. 18.

evident. But what then? Was Theodosius a mean abject prince, and Ambrose a haughty or hypocritical pontiff? Neither the one nor the other is true. The general life of the former evinces him a great and wise prince, who had the true fear of God before his eyes : and the latter thought he did no more than what the office, which he bore, required ; and his affectionate regard for the emperor, and sincere concern for his soul, appear evident. On the whole, the discipline itself thus magnanimously exercised by Ambrose, and humbly submitted to by Theodosius, when stripped of its superstitions and formalities, was salutary. Who does not see, that the contempt of discipline in our days, among the great, has proved extremely pernicious to the interests of practical religion ?

After the murder of Valentinian, a person named Eugenius usurped the empire of the West, who again erected the altar of Victory, and encouraged the Pagans ; but their hopes were of short duration. Theodosius soon stripped him of his life and power, and thus became sole master of the Roman world. Under his authority the extirpation of idolatry was carried on with more decisive vigour than ever. At Alexandria the votaries of the renowned temple of Serapis made an insurrection, and murdered a number of Christians. The emperor, being informed of this, declared that he would not suffer the glory of their martyrdom to be stained with any executions, and that he was determined to pardon the murderers in hopes of their conversion, but that the temples, the cause of so much mischief, should be destroyed. There was a remarkable image of Serapis in the temple, of which it had been confidently given out, that if any man touched it, the earth would open, the heaven be dissolved, and all things run back into a general chaos. A soldier however, animated by Theophilus the bishop, was so hardy as to make the experiment. With an axe

he cleft him down the jaws; an army of mice fled out at the breach he had made; and Serapis was hacked in pieces. On the destruction of idolatry in Egypt, it happened that the Nile did not overflow so plentifully, as it had been wont to do. It is, said the Pagans, because it is affronted at the prevailing impiety; it has not been worshipped with sacrifice*, as it is used to be. Theodosius, being informed of this, declared like a man who believed in God, and preferred heavenly things to earthly; "We ought to prefer our duty to God to the streams of the Nile, and the cause of piety to the fertility of the country; let the Nile never flow again, rather than idolatry be encouraged." The event afforded a fine comment on our Saviour's words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you." The Nile returned to its course, and rose above the highest mark, which, at other times, it seldom reached. The Pagans, overcome in argument, made use of ridicule, the great sanctuary of profaneness, and cried out in their theatres, that the old doting god was grown so weak, that he could not hold his water. Numbers, however, made a more serious use of the remarkable Providence, and Egypt forsook the superstition, in which for so many ages it had been involved. And thus the country which had nourished idolatry more early and more passionately than others, was made the special scene of the triumphs of God and his Christ.

Libanius, the friend of Julian, was yet alive, and held the office of Pretorian prefect under the emperor. The gentleness of this prince encouraged the sophist to present him with an oration in favour of the temples; in which he trode in the steps of Symmachus, and pleaded the cause of the gods, as well as so bad a subject would admit. It is remarkable, that he argued, "Religion ought to be planted

* Sozom. B. VII. c. 20.

in men's minds by reason, not by force." Thus Pagans could now talk, who for ages had acted toward Christians in so different a manner*. The writer of this oration was himself a palpable instance of the clemency of Christian governors compared with Pagan. He lived in a respectable situation, unmolested, the champion of expiring Paganism; and many others were treated in the same manner.

Coming to Rome, the zealous emperor in a deliberate speech endeavoured to persuade the senate, very many of whom still patronised idolatry, to embrace the Christian faith, as the only religion, which taught men how to obtain pardon of sin, and holiness of life. The Gentile part of them declared, that they would not give up a religion, under which Rome had prospered near twelve hundred years. Theodosius told them, that he saw no reason, why he should maintain their religion, and that he would not only cease to furnish the expense out of the exchequer, but abolish the sacrifices themselves. The senators complained, that the neglect of the rites was the grand cause, why the empire declined so much: a specious argument well calculated to gain upon worldly minds, and which had great effect on many Pagans at this time. We may see by and by, what a laboured and animated answer to it was written by one of the greatest and

* At this very time, while Theodosius treated Pagans with moderation, under a Christian establishment, the Christians were treated with unbounded cruelty under a Pagan establishment in Persia. The blameable zeal of Audas, a bishop, gave the first occasion to it. Moved with divine zeal, as he supposed, he overturned a temple in which the sacred fire was kept †, Isdigerdes the king ordered him to rebuild it, which he refusing, the Christian Churches were ordered to be destroyed, and the man to be slain. A persecution thus commencing on specious grounds, was continued for thirty years with unremitting barbarity. The tortures of Christians were dreadful beyond measure; yet they persevered, and numbers voluntarily endured afflictions, for the joy of eternal life set before them.

† Called *arpuur*. See Theodoret, B. V. c. 39. Magdeburg. Cent. 4. c. 3.

ablest of the fathers. Theodosius now made it a capital crime to sacrifice, or attend the Pagan rites. In vain did the patrons of idolatry exercise their parts and assiduity. The emperor was determined, and issued out a law that made it treasonable to offer sacrifice, or to consult the entrails of beasts*. Incense and perfumes were likewise forbidden. Paganism never lifted up its head after this; habit alone supported it; and objects of sense being removed, zeal was extinguished, and as Theodosius was not disposed to make martyrs, so no Pagans felt any inclination to become such. This great prince expired at Milan in the year 395, about sixty years of age, having reigned sixteen years. And the century before us nearly closes with the full establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire. The religion which was of God made its way through all opposition; that which was of man, supported only by power and custom, failed to thrive, as soon as it lost the ascendant, and within a generation it ceased almost universally to exist among men.

Death of
Theodosius.
A. D.
395.

The real character of Theodosius is by no means doubtful. For though the praises of Ambrose may be suspected, yet Aurelius Victor, a Gentile writer, must be credited, when he commends this emperor. His clemency, liberality and generosity were admirable. He was brave and successful in war; but his wars were forced upon him. He was an enemy to drunkenness, and was himself a model of gravity, temperance and chastity in private life. By a law he forbade minstrels and other servants of lewdness to attend at feasts. Thus he is represented by a contemporary, whose account is certainly to be preferred to that of a later writer, the partial Zozimus, who treats every Christian emperor with malignity. I see in Theodosius the triumphs of the Cross; nor in all the Pagan history of the emperors was there one to be compared with him. They had no principles

* Cave's Introduction to the Lives of the Fathers, Vol. II.

to produce humility. The excess of anger was, as we have seen, his predominant evil ; and his case teaches at once two lessons : one is, that the best men need to guard daily against their besetting sins ; and the other is, that even our infirmities may be turned to good account by the promotion of our humility, and the Redeemer's glory.

Flaccilla, the wife of Theodosius, appears to have been a pious and humble person. She was constantly reminding him of the private and low condition, in which they had lived together before his advancement, and exhorting him to attend to the duties of religion. She herself was an edifying pattern of condescension and liberality. The sick, the afflicted, the poor, were relieved not only by her alms, but also by her benevolent attention and labour. Some representing to her, that it was beneath her dignity to take care of hospitals and the houses of mourning, she answered, "the distribution of gold indeed becomes the imperial dignity ; but I offer to him, who hath given me that dignity, my personal labours as a token of gratitude." That grace is strong indeed, which melts not under the beams of prosperity. Theodosius was once inclined to converse with Eunomius, an able Arian, who lived at Constantinople, and whom, on account of his heretical practices, he banished thence. But Flaccilla, who trembled for the salvation of her husband, (I speak seriously what Mr. Gibbon does scornfully, chap. xxviii. vol. iii.) dissuaded him from it. It is pleasant to see orthodox profession consistently united with virtuous practice ; this can only be the case where men are taught of God indeed. It ought to be known, that the emperor, who in the cause of God never yielded a tittle to heresy, in his own cause was soft and flexible, and with princely liberality supported the aged mother, and brought up the orphan daughters of the usurper Maximus.

CHAP. XVII.

REFLECTIONS ON ECCLESIASTICAL
ESTABLISHMENTS.

“BUT what right had Theodosius to make his religion that of the state? Ought not every person, in this matter, to be left to his own conscience? Is it not a violation of the right of private judgment, to impose religious sentiments on the subjects of any government? How therefore can Theodosius, or others who have acted like him, be cleared from the charge of exercising tyrannical authority?”

CHAP.
XVII.

There was a time, when the fallacy of such notions would have been seen through with less difficulty: at present, the tide of popular opinion runs strong in their favour, and it becomes more necessary to examine their foundation. Moreover, the characters of many of the brightest and best Christians are so interwoven in this question, and the determination of it so much affects the honour of the Divine operations in the propagation of Christianity, that the reader, I trust, will be disposed to receive these reflections with candour and attention, however defective they may appear to him in some respects, or inadequate to the solution of several difficulties, which may be conceived to belong to this intricate subject.

I shall take for granted, that the Gospel is of divine authority, and ought to be received, on pain of condemnation, by every one, who has the opportunity of hearing it fairly proposed; and that a man ought no more to plead the pretence of conscience for rejecting its fundamentals, than for the commission of murder, theft, or any other criminal action. The reason is, because its light and evidences do so unquestionably carry the impression of divine goodness and divine authority, that wickedness of

heart, and not weakness of capacity, must be the cause of the rejection of it by any man. I send those, who are inclined to dispute these positions, to the many proofs given of them by the best evangelical writers in all ages, and above all to the Scriptures themselves, which every where declare, that "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*." If the reader bear these things in memory, he will find some of the most specious objections to ecclesiastical establishments overturned.

For, few persons will, I think, dispute the principle of general expediency and utility, as directly applicable to this important subject. Has not every state a right to ordain what is conducive to its preservation and the good of society? And, for these purposes, is any thing to be compared with right religion and the fear of God? What shall hinder, then, but that the state has the same right to make laws concerning religion, as concerning property, commerce, and agriculture? Is it not a great mistake to separate religious considerations from civil? And while you attempt to do so in theory, will it not be found impossible in practice? And should not laws be always made for practice, and not for mere speculation? The more the governors feel the importance of religion, (I speak not now for the next life, but for this,) the more concerned will they be to establish it. They must do so, if they regard even the temporal good of their subjects.

Then, briefly, these three considerations, namely, 1st, the clear evidences by which Christianity is supported; 2dly, the importance of its doctrines; and, 3dly, general expediency, appear to me to supply materials for an argument in favour of ecclesiastical establishments, which admits of no satisfactory answer. Thus: the Gospel is of divine authority;

* John iii. the end.

its fundamentals are revealed with so much clearness, and are of so much consequence to the interests of mankind, that they cannot be rejected without great wickedness of heart; even the wrath of God is declared to abide on him who believeth not the Son. Under these circumstances, will any man, who thinks it the duty of the supreme power to consult the good of the community, believe it a matter of indifference, whether suitable forms of prayer and thanksgiving, or in short, whether a convenient and well-digested Liturgy*, founded on the genuine principles of revealed religion, be composed for public use, and also whether proper persons and places be provided by the state, for the worship of God and for the instruction of the people?

But besides these general reasons for a national establishment of true religion, there are other considerations relative to the same subject, which merit our attention.

It is certain, that from the earliest ages and under patriarchal government, when holy men were favoured with divine revelations, governors taught the true religion, and did not permit their subjects to propagate atheism, idolatry, or false religion†. Abraham, Isaac‡, and Jacob|| governed their families in this manner; so did Noah before them§. As families grew into nations, the same practical ideas prevailed. At length, when it pleased God to select one nation for his service, the same sentiments respecting church-establishment continued, whether kings, or judges, or priests, were in possession of the

* In such undertakings, the general aim, undoubtedly, ought to be, not to gratify this or that party in unreasonable demands; but to do that, which most tends to the preservation of peace and unity in the church; the procuring of reverence, and exciting of piety and devotion in the public worship of God; and the taking away of occasion from them that seek occasion of cavil or quarrel against the liturgy of the church. See the preface to the Book of Common Prayer.

† Gen. xviii. 19. ‡ Gen. xxviii. 1. || Gen. xxxv. 2.

§ Gen. ix. toward the end.

executive power. . I am aware that the Jewish government was a THEOCRACY, and that it has therefore many things peculiar to itself; but so much perhaps may safely be inferred from its constitution, that it is lawful for the sovereign authority to make regulations for the support of true religion. It is hardly to be conceived that God would interweave into his theocracy, what in its own nature is unlawful.

Nor is this argument, which depends upon the general administration of ecclesiastical affairs in the Jewish theocracy, much weakened by any conclusions that may be drawn from particular instances of Divine interference and direction which occur in the history of the same theocracy. When the Jews are ordered to extirpate the Canaanites, and when Agag is hewed in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal, these are occasional instances of Divine vengeance exercised against iniquity: we may readily admit, that such instances form no lawful precedents for governments to follow, while we maintain, that a mode of ecclesiastical administration ordained by God, and continued for a long series of years, cannot possibly be an improper example for religious magistrates to imitate. However, in contending for the lawfulness of such imitation, I would by no means be understood to include all the particular actions or measures of Jewish governors in ecclesiastical matters; the reasons of these actions or measures may have long since ceased to exist. In this argument I have respect only, in general, to the principal feature of the Jewish constitution, namely, the unquestionable authority, which the magistrate possessed in ecclesiastical regulations: a very remarkable fact! which I recommend to the serious consideration of those Dissenters from our church-establishment, who do not hesitate to pronounce the interference of the civil magistrate in the religious institutions of a nation to be always unlawful.

If these reasons and examples be well weighed, it will hardly be doubted, but that when the Gospel was preached among the Jews, if their Sanhedrim had received it, they would have had a right to make it the established religion of the nation. They might have said, and they probably would have said, "This religion is true and divine; the people cannot reject it without rejecting, in positive wickedness of heart, the authority of God himself: the doctrines of this religion are of the utmost importance: it is therefore expedient, that it should be supported by the state, and we are countenanced in this conclusion by the example of our ancestors."

And in regard to such modern nations, as profess to believe the Scripture-history of the Jews and of Jesus Christ, it may fairly be asked, What are the peculiar circumstances, that should render it improper for the governing powers to feel the influence of the same reasons and examples? Can any good argument be invented to prove, that, in the momentous affair of religion, they ought not to be actuated by the grand principle of general expediency, when, in matters of less consequence, they evidently show themselves to be so actuated, and no one disputes the propriety of their conduct?

If an inferior state should fear the displeasure of a superior one in its neighbourhood, which might have sufficient strength to destroy it, will any man deny to the supreme power of this lesser state a right to prescribe to its own subjects a mode of conduct that should not give umbrage to the greater? If no man will deny this, let the concession be applied to religion: Irreligion and idolatry provoke the Almighty; a nation wholly given up to them has reason to fear his vengeance, especially if they persist in sinful practices against light and the fairest means of instruction. Then let the magistrate act consistently: let him only adhere to the acknowledged principle, that the government ought

suppressed which has a tendency to destroy the efficacy of that provision, or diminish its influence? And on these principles acted the good kings, judges, and priests of Israel, in abundance of instances.

Thus, by steps, which to such as have a real reverence for revealed religion, will probably appear neither tedious nor obscure, are we arrived at several conclusions of the utmost consequence in practice.

1. The supreme power has no right to violate liberty of conscience, by extorting confessions of faith.

2. It has a right—To establish the true religion, by positive institutions.

3. To ensure public respect to these institutions, by penal laws.

4. To restrain and punish the propagators of irreligious opinions.

But it must not be dissembled, that the 4th conclusion contains a proposition in some measure undefined, and involved in difficulties, which require further discussion. Who shall determine, to what extent the authority of the supreme magistrate reaches, in the suppression of irreligious opinions? Where shall we find a common arbiter between him and the people, when they differ in their notions? Or, is the magistrate permitted to restrain and punish the propagators of every sentiment that happens to clash with the tenets, which he has introduced into his establishment?

It is much to be wished, that persons whose principles and habits incline them to give, in some respects, different answers to these inquiries, would, in the first place, seriously endeavour to find out, how far they actually think alike, and by so doing come nearer to a mutual agreement, rather than embitter their tempers by acrimonious disputes concerning inferior matters, widen the breach of Christian friendship, and keep entirely out of sight

the more important considerations, in which their judgments might have concurred. Sincere Christians of every denomination who have duly weighed the arguments contained in this chapter, would then, I think, be disposed to admit that the propagators of infidelity, of idolatry, of atheism, and in short of gross irreligion, ought to be effectually restrained and punished by the civil magistrate ; and if this be admitted, if men of every station heartily join in this conclusion, the existing laws against irreligion will be vigorously executed, and a great practical point will be gained.

Moreover, it would soon be agreed, that in matters of subordinate consequence, which are evidently not essential to Christianity, the civil magistrate ought not to interfere at all, by restraining or punishing such persons as differ from the establishment, but that he should suffer them to enjoy a complete toleration, and to serve God in their own way.

The essentials of Christianity ought in my judgment, to be effectually protected by the laws, against the profane and libellous attacks of infidels of every denomination. I do not think it sufficient to say "The truth will take care of itself." The unlearned and the unwary ought not to be exposed to the mischievous effects of such publications. Nevertheless, I am sensible that on this head it seems impossible to define the limits of the authority of the magistrate so precisely, as to exclude all doubt and ambiguity. For, besides that questions will sometimes arise even respecting the essentials themselves, the expediency of the punishment will frequently depend on peculiar circumstances.

There is a great difference, for example, between a serious inquirer after truth, and one, who makes a mock of religion ; between the man, who proposes his doubts with modesty, and wishes to have them removed, and the profane sceptic or infidel, who under the pretence of candour and fair

investigation, secretly rejoices in disseminating objections, and in undermining the faith of unguarded unbelievers. Add to this; it will not always, be prudent to punish even those, who openly and scandalously attack the established religion of the country. In many cases, it will be much better to pass by the impudent offender with contempt, than, by inflicting the penalty he has justly incurred, to excite the curiosity of the public, to make the libellous publication more known, and to render its unworthy author of more consequence.

It is not to be expected, that all should think alike. Let Christian fundamentals therefore be preserved as effectually as possible by an ecclesiastical establishment, and by laws which defend and support it; let there be a toleration for those who profess themselves to hold the essentials of Christianity, but may not think themselves authorized in conscience to conform, in all points, to the established church: This is not only allowable, but perfectly just and equitable. To deny it, is tyranny. Thus acted Theodosius with respect to the Novatians: and this seems the utmost limit of human wisdom in this difficult subject.

The advantages of a Christian establishment are doubtless great: the prevention of general profaneness, the decent observation of the Sabbath, and the opportunity of diffusing the Gospel in dark and barbarous regions; all these things were the evident good consequences of the establishment during the fourth century. But let us suppose, that Constantine and his successors had contented themselves with encouraging the Gospel, and had permitted idolatry and irreligion to continue unchecked. Considering the depravity of human nature, one sees not how, without a miracle, Christianity would have pervaded the Roman empire at all; half, or the major part, of the Roman world might have remained in irreligion and idolatry to this day.

Similar advantages of an establishment may be observed in the history of our own country.

On the other hand, it has been frequently said, that the great corruption of the Gospel began from the days of Constantine. This, I have shown already, was not the case. The corruption had begun a considerable time before, nor does it appear that the decline of vital religion was greater than might have been expected from the general course of things; and if no establishment at all had taken place, it would probably have been more rapid. There would certainly have been this remarkable difference, namely, that half of the Roman world, without the aid of the magistrate, would have remained destitute of even the form of Christianity. Corruption of doctrine and discipline ought not to be laid at the door of ecclesiastical establishments, but to be imputed to the degeneracy of men themselves. It would not be hard to point out many persons in our own country, who voluntarily separate from the establishment, and who are nearly void of church-discipline, and even more deeply and more systematically corrupt in doctrine than the most heterodox and unevangelical theologians, who inconsistently remain members of the church of England. The best ecclesiastical establishments cannot prevent the decay of vital godliness; but, under the providence of God, they strengthen the hands of sincere, humble-minded believers, and check the influence both of open and of disguised enemies of Christianity.

The Liturgy alone of the Church of England has long proved, and continues to prove, a strong bulwark against all the efforts of heretical innovators, and corrupters of doctrine.

If these arguments and observations were kept in view, dissenters, who have been accustomed to speak disrespectfully of our ecclesiastical establishment, would probably find more to commend, and less to find fault with.

I shall not be surprised, however, if some persons still feel themselves dissatisfied with the result of these reflections. The subject is arduous and intricate, and has difficulties peculiarly its own. The variety of religious opinions among men is almost endless; and it is no easy matter to unite into one political mass, a multitude of particles totally heterogeneous with respect to each other. A notion also has been maintained with much industry and zeal, that religion ought to be "fettered by no political institutions." We have been perpetually asked, Why should the majority, why should governors, why should any one dictate to us in religion? Why have not we a right to choose for ourselves, what religion we wish to propagate? However confident others may be of the rectitude of their system, may not we be as confident of the rectitude of ours? Who shall decide between us?

This is specious, and many seem hence inclined entirely to separate religious from political considerations. "Appoint," say they, "a good government, perfectly abstracted from all religion. Let the civil magistrate show himself totally impartial in regard to all modes of faith: let him protect all persons so long as they obey the rules of civil society. Let the rights of conscience be kept sacred: in religion man is accountable to God alone." Those, who hold out this language, cut the gordian knot at once, and would extricate us from all difficulties, provided they could prove, that it is really practicable to erect a permanent government perfectly detached from all religious sanctions. But this would indeed be "A MIGHTY MAZE WITHOUT A PLAN!" Suppose a number should choose to be atheists: If this reasoning be good, atheism, as well as any other opinion, ought to be tolerated. Then, mark the consequences: the use of oaths, which among all civilized nations has ever been the legitimate method of **ENDING ALL STRIFE**, is at once superseded. He must have a considerable degree of hardihood in politics,

who would attempt to support a government contradictory, in its whole plan, to the universal voice of ancient wisdom. Certain it is, that in Scripture all just government is founded on the fear of God, and all legislators, Pagan as well as Jewish and Christian, have, with a greater or less degree of perfection, proceeded on this foundation. The belief of a future state, of some supreme Judge and Arbiter of mankind, has ever been instilled into subjects by all lawgivers. It were easy to multiply proofs of this. Suffice it to give the testimony of one, who may be called himself a host, on account of his great knowledge of mankind, the extent and variety of his learning, and the solidity of his judgment. Plutarch, *advers. Colotem.* p. 1125, after having observed, that no man could ever say, that he saw a city without some sort of temple, or some mark of divine worship, subjoins, *αλλα πολις αν μοι δοκει μαλλον εδαφες χωρις, η πολιτεια, της περι θεων δοξης αναιρηθειας πανταπασι, συγασιν λαβειν, η λαβουσα τηρησαι.* “A city seems to me more capable of being built without a foundation, than a polity is capable of receiving a system, or having received one, of preserving it, if sentiments of religion be entirely removed.”

Will any adversary of religious establishments say, that no considerable part of a community will ever go the length of throwing aside all religion; and that, in these enlightened times, men will at least retain the belief of a God and of a future state?—I wish the contrary supposition could be proved an extravagant conjecture.—What are the present doctrines of a neighbouring nation, who have not only rejected the sacred institutions of the Bible, as the Sabbath, and the division of time into periods of seven days, &c. but who have also lately discovered that death is an eternal sleep, and of course, that there is no reason to apprehend a future state of retribution *?—When such strides as these are on re

* Written about the time of the French revolution and the murder of the king, 1792–3.

taken, PRACTICAL atheism can be at no great distance. And as to a merely theoretical belief of one SELF-EXISTENT Cause, or of several self-existent causes, where the Deity is excluded from being the moral governor of the world, such a speculative notion is hardly worth contending for.

It is too true, that the effect of a general belief of religion on men's practice is faint and languid, and by no means proportioned to the importance of the subject; but perhaps we can scarce decide how much better in its moral influence, some principle is than none at all. Men are naturally prone to wickedness; the common sense of mankind has in some degree always confessed this; and here, by a singular concurrence of circumstances, the language of poets has more truth in it than that of philosophers. The former speak the feeling of nature, and confess that men unrestrained will run into all sorts of wickedness; the latter, by sophistry, have perverted every thing in morals. How is it possible to construct a government, that shall preserve order and decorum for such depraved beings, without some religious establishment? The very attempt itself is to encourage atheism; and men, who find the regard of the Divine authority to be left out of the class of political duties, will naturally be led to the greatest and the highest degrees of profaneness. To propagate impiety is to propagate human misery. Shall men be restrained, by the civil sword, from circulating whatever may be hurtful to the health and property of their fellow-creatures; and will you allow them, with no restraint of any kind, to propagate that which will poison the mind, and render human life an intolerable scene of evil? Whether men like the expression of ALLIANCE BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE, or not, there is a natural connexion between government and religion, which, in practice, will appear, and have real effects, however plausible it may seem, in theory, to reprobate such connexion.

On this occasion the laudable practice of some Dissenters from the established church is frequently appealed to, for the purpose of showing, that love of Christianity and of our country, and all other virtues both public and private, may abound and flourish without the support of any laws in favour of particular opinions.—It is easy to show that there is not much in this argument—and for this end, we need neither dissect it very nicely, nor detract from the merits either of individuals or of whole sects. Let it be admitted, that, in many cases, the conduct of Dissenters has been useful and exemplary. Yet who will deny, that probably the existence, and certainly the energy, of sectaries themselves, frequently depend in some measure on their opposition to the establishment? And happy it is for themselves, happy for the members of the established church, happy for the community at large, when an opposition of this sort shows itself in producing a virtuous emulation. We may then expect to see Christian examples of industry, learning, piety, and patriotism.

But, without an establishment provided by the state, the greater part will scarcely have any religion at all, wickedness will be practised on the boldest scale; and if the form of government have a large portion of liberty in its texture, the manners will be egregiously dissolute. Democracy indeed, pure and unqualified, is the system which will harmonize the most easily with a polity altogether abstracted from religion; and this very consideration affords, perhaps, no inconsiderable argument against that species of government. But even if the government were, in other respects, the soundest and the wisest effort of human sagacity, it will probably prove only a curse to its citizens, unless some legal provision be made for religion. God himself, there is the highest reason to conclude, WILL SET HIS

FACE AGAINST IT, and confound it. Nations, whose government has been seasoned with religious institutions, can scarce conceive to what lengths of villainy and flagitiousness, such an atheistic institution will lead its subjects; and all Europe will not be at a loss where to look for an instance of its effects.

Without entering minutely into the circumstances of Pagan nations, let us take it for granted, that there are certain fundamental articles of revealed religion, a few of immense importance, which the legislator ought carefully to select from a number of subordinate truths and circumstantials. These last he may safely leave to the consciences of men, by providing a toleration in which they may securely range. But the essentials of religion it is his duty to support, and not permit them to be derided and insulted by the profane attacks either of ignorant or of learned enemies of religion. To neglect them, would obviously be a far greater crime in him, than in those who have not had his advantages of information. Is it still said, Who shall decide what these fundamentals are? If men would seriously weigh the doctrines of the Scriptures, with an humble spirit, and in the use of prayer, they would probably be surprised to find how very small would be their differences of opinion. And one thing, which I propose to show in the course of this history, is the agreement of persons of this description in all ages; for in regard to fundamentals, it is certainly much closer and more uniform than many believe. No man ought to plead conscience for the neglect of that duty on which his salvation must depend. It is certain that these essentials cannot be neglected or despised without a turpitude of heart, which the Scripture connects with the final ruin of the soul. The difficulty of providing a government equitably adapted to all consciences,

if pushed into the extreme, supposes that there is no certain criterion of divine truth, and that men may, without moral guilt, believe any thing or nothing. But as these positions are inadmissible with all but Sceptics, and persons altogether profane, the connexion between sentiment and practice is too important to justify the neglect of all religion in political establishments, for the sake of pleasing the worst part of the human species. If, after all, a government established on such principles bear hard on dissolute men, there seems no remedy; guilt must have its inconveniences. And there are no common principles on which a believer of revealed religion and an infidel can unite in the formation of a government.

The practical inferences are obvious. The subjects of a Christian government will consist of three classes. The friends of the establishment, who will, of course, support it; Dissenters, who, owning its religious fundamentals, differ in some subordinate sentiments; and those Dissenters, who are hostile to all religion, or, at least, are fond of a religion subversive of the great truths of Christianity. The members of the establishment, at the same time that they support its institutions with firmness, ought to exercise forbearance and charity toward the first class of Dissenters, and to think no worse of any man for differing in opinion from himself, where it is evident that he acts with uprightness. They owe charity also to the second class of Dissenters, but charity of a very different kind. The first class of Dissenters, convinced of the importance and utility of religious establishments, ought to support that, of whose friendly protection they daily feel the benefit in society, while they enjoy the privilege of toleration; and to view themselves as coalescing with the churchmen, who, like them, hold what is fundamentally Christian, rather than with those Dissenters who oppose Christianity itself. To persons

of this last character I can give no political advice, till they learn antecedently, to receive the religion of Jesus itself, because till then, I can apply no principles to their consciences, which they will admit.

The happy government, under which we live, has, for many years past, exhibited to the world a fine example of an ecclesiastical establishment, framed and modelled according to the principles inculcated in this Chapter. The great truths of religion are supported by laws ; and the same laws provide effectual restraints against propagators of false doctrine. Notwithstanding the vice, heresy, and profaneness, which prevail among us, we do not so much stand in need of new laws, as of zealous magistrates to enforce those which already exist.

It is sometimes said, that subscription to articles, and other tests of religious opinions, are injurious to the morals of men, by inducing them to act the part of hypocrites, for the sake of worldly advantage. Supposing this to happen in some instances, nevertheless the answer is, this inconvenience is to be hazarded, because unavoidable, if we aim at promoting the general good. It is expedient that there should be a public liturgy, and proper persons to read the same, and to teach the true doctrines of Christ ; and it is very necessary that these persons should be known to approve the forms of worship according to which they officiate, and to believe the doctrines which they are bound to inculcate. If some persons will, hypocritically, profess themselves believers of what in their hearts they think contrary to truth, the guilt of such persons will lie at their own door in this case exactly as in all others, where men act insincerely for the sake of gain or convenience. The true state of this question is, whether an ecclesiastical establishment wisely constructed, has not in its nature a tendency to propagate the influence of Christianity, that is, to make

its doctrines known, and sincerely believed, and its precepts diligently practised among all ranks of people ; and not, whether a sacred institution of this kind is capable of being, now and then, abused and perverted, or of becoming a snare and temptation to an unfair mind.

I shall conclude this subject with briefly taking notice of an objection, which, on its first proposal, is apt to startle the best wishers to religion, and the warmest advocates of ecclesiastical establishments. Suppose the civil magistrate should happen to have formed an erroneous judgment concerning the true religion ; will he not in that case, according to our own principle of general expediency, be justified in establishing a false one ? I scruple not to give a decisive negative to this question, so far as it concerns those, who have had an opportunity of understanding and receiving the revealed will of God. For, the situation of such countries as have never heard of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, I do not here consider. The evidences of the truth of Christianity are so full and so clear, that as we have repeatedly said, they cannot be rejected without great wickedness of heart. Nothing therefore can justify the civil magistrate in establishing a false religion. Shall we restrain and punish by positive laws the individual, who propagates atheism or infidelity, and at the same time shall we approve the conduct of the magistrate, who erects and supports a national establishment of false religion, and who, by his institutions, prolongs and extends the mischief, much more than any individual, unarmed with the authority of laws, could possibly do ? Such a magistrate may indeed plead his sincerity and scruples of conscience ; but we have the authority of the word of God for ascribing his unbelief to gross negligence, or wilful blindness. There is then no difficulty on this head : governors of states, if they support a false religion, have reason to expect

the heavy judgments of God. Let them consider the history of Jeroboam and of his successors in the kingdom of Israel. They all **SINNED, AND THEY ALL MADE ISRAEL TO SIN, IN PROVOKING THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL TO ANGER WITH THEIR VANITIES**, that is, with their establishment of false religion*: **UNTIL THE LORD REMOVED ISRAEL OUT OF HIS SIGHT†.**

A real difficulty, however, respecting the **OBEDIENCE** of the subject may occur, whenever it pleases God, for the punishment of the sins of a nation, to permit a false religion to be established and supported by the ruling powers.

It may then be asked, whether a true believer of Christianity ought not to oppose the religious institutions of the country, in which he lives, and to propagate his own opinions? or, whether he is to submit to the civil magistrate, “to bow down himself in the house of Rimmon,” and to surrender that faith, upon which he depends for eternal salvation?

The general solution of these questions must be derived from a due consideration of the meaning of that apostolical maxim, “We ought to obey God rather than men‡.” If therefore, through the corruption of human nature, the state will not establish true Christianity, but a false religion, I know no way to be pursued, but that of the Apostle’s, namely, for believers to propagate and to practise divine truth, and to suffer patiently for the truth’s sake, according to the will of God. For, on the one hand, I find nothing in Scripture to justify Christians in resisting their governors by force, or in compelling them to make new ordinances; and, on the other hand, to comply with Anti-Christian institutions, would be to “sin a great sin,” as Jeroboam’s subjects did§. The middle line of conduct is pointed

* 1 Kings, xvi. 13.

† Acts, v. 29.

‡ 2 Kings, xvii. 23.

§ 2 Kings, xvii. 21.

out by our Saviour in that sentence, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another*."

CENT.
IV.

Several valuable miscellaneous articles must now be attended to, before we dismiss the fourth century.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE PRIVATE LIFE AND THE WORKS OF AMBROSE.

If we had the real life of this bishop written by Paulinus of Nola, we might make a profitable use of it. But that, which goes under his name†, is so stuffed with fables, that I scarcely know how to quote it. Ambrose died about the year 397, admired, regretted, and lamented by the whole Christian world. His life not improbably had been shortened by the incessant activity of his mind, and by the multiplicity of his employments; for he was only fifty-seven years old, and had been appointed bishop of Milan at the age of thirty-four.

Ambrose
dies,
A. D.
397.

His spirit was remarkably kind and sympathetic; his benevolence was extended to all, but especially those of the household of faith. His estate, real and personal, he bestowed on the poor, and for the support of the church, styling the poor his stewards and treasurers‡. His labours were immense: he administered the eucharist daily, and preached commonly on the Lord's day, frequently on extraordinary occasions, and spent much time in teaching catechumens. His temper was heroic and strong; and no dignity or authority could shelter offenders from his episcopal rebukes, where he deemed it his

* Matt. x. 23.

† It is prefixed to the works of Ambrose.

‡ Orat. in Aux.

duty to reprehend. Augustine tells us, that he found it, in a manner, impossible to have access to him, because of the multiplicity of his employments. The time he could spare from pastoral and charitable engagements was devoted to study and meditation.

The moral writings of Ambrose contain various things of solid utility; his *Treatise on Offices* shines among these. It was evidently his wish to imitate Tully, and to show the superiority of Christian over philosophical morals. A noble design, but, considered as a whole, feebly executed, because conducted without a plan. He modestly owns indeed, that he was called to teach, before he himself had learned. But he might have both preached and written better, had he always attended to the simple word of God, and exercised his own natural good sense in humble dependence on *DIVINE GRACE*, and paid less regard to the fanciful writings of Origen, which corrupted his understanding exceedingly. Less of this, however, appears in his moral than in his theological pieces.

In his usual manner, which is sententious, and full of quick turns, he discourses strikingly of the excellent use of taciturnity, and the difficulty of acquiring it. "Most men speak, when they do not know how to be silent. Seldom do you see any one silent, when to speak is of no profit. He is wise who knows when to hold his peace.—Must we then be dumb? No; for there is a time to speak, and a time to be silent. And if we must give an account of every idle word, take care lest you have to answer also for idle silence. Tie your tongue, lest it be wanton and luxuriant: keep it within the banks; a rapidly flowing river soon collects mud*."

His ideas of decorum in behaviour and carriage he illustrates by the account of two persons of his own diocese. The first was a friend of his own,

* C. 2 & 3. B. 1. de Officiis.

who by sedulous offices recommended himself to Ambrose, in order to be admitted as a clergyman into his bishopric. The only reason why Ambrose refused, was because his gestures were light and indecent. The other he found already a clergyman, and made this sole exception, namely, of indecent levity, to his conduct. His judgment was verified in both. The former, during the Arian persecution at Milan, deserted the faith; the latter, through the love of gain, denied himself to be a priest of Ambrose's diocese, to avoid judicial penalties.

His directions to his clergy would deserve to be made a part of an episcopal charge in every age of the Church. "It becomes," says he, "the prudence and gravity of clergymen, to avoid the public banquets frequently made for strangers: you may exercise hospitality to them at your own houses, and by this caution there will be no room for reproach. Entertainments of this sort take up much time, and also evidence a fondness for feasting. Secular and voluptuous discourse is apt to creep in; to shut your ears is impossible; to forbid, will be looked on as imperious. Why do you not employ the time which is free from clerical employments in reading? Why do you not revisit Christ, speak to Christ, hear Christ? We speak to him, when we pray; we hear him, when we read the divine oracles. What have we to do with other men's houses? Let them rather come to us, who want us. What have we to do with idle chit-chat? We received the ministry to attend on the service of Christ, not to pay court to men*."

In his book of Repentance, he remonstrates with great justice against the inexorable spirit of the Novatians, in refusing to re-admit penitents into the church. "Learn of me," says Christ, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." "I am unmerciful, says the Novatian †." In the same chapter, he bears testimony

* B. i. de Officiis, 20.

† B. i. c. 2.

to the immaculate conception of Jesus, and to the native depravity of mankind. "He was not like the rest of us, born in the ordinary way of generation, but born from the Holy Ghost, and he received from the virgin a spotless body, with no taint of sin. For we are all born in sin, as David witnesses; I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me." I only remind the reader here of the preservation of two important truths in the Church during the days of Ambrose.

Hear how humbly and evangelically he speaks of himself*. "How shall I hear thee say to me, He has loved much, and is forgiven much? I confess my debts were greater than those of the penitent woman, and more was forgiven me, who was called into the ministry from the noise of the forum, and the terror of judicial administration. Yet, if we cannot equal her, the Lord Jesus knows how to support the weak, and to bring with himself the fountain of living water. He came to the grave himself. Oh, that thou wouldest come to this my sepulchre of corruption, Lord Jesus, and wash me with thy tears! If thou weep for me, I shall be saved. Thou shalt call me from the grave of this body, and say, come forth, that my thoughts may go forth to Christ and call forth thy servant. Though, bound with the chains of my sins, I am entangled hand and foot, and buried in dead works; on thy call I shall come forth free, and be found one of those who sit at thy table. It shall be said, behold a man taken from the midst of secular vanity, remains in the priesthood not by his own strength, but by the grace of Christ. Preserve, Lord, thy own gift. I know myself unworthy of the episcopal office, because I had given myself to this world, but, by thy grace, I am what I am. The least of all bishops: yet because I have

* B. ii. de Pœnitentia, c. 8.

undertaken some labour for thy Church, preserve this fruit, lest whom thou callest to the ministry, when lost, thou shouldest suffer to perish in that ministry: And particularly, granting me the spirit of sympathizing with sinners; that I may not proudly chide, but mourn and weep; that while I deplore another, I may mourn over myself, saying, Tamar is more righteous than I*. Perhaps a young person may have sinned, deceived and hurried on into folly; we old persons sin also. The law of the flesh rebels against the law of our mind, even in us, whose duty it is to teach. Tamar is more righteous than I. We blame the avarice of another; let us remember whether our conduct has been stained with the same vice, which secretly dwells in our corrupt nature, and let each say, Tamar is more righteous than I. The same may be said with respect to the vice of anger. This is the way to avoid the severity of that just rebuke of our Lord concerning the mote and the beam.—He who rejoices in another's fall, rejoices in the devil's victory. Let us rather grieve, when we hear that a man perishes for whom Christ died. Let us repent, and hope for pardon by faith, not as an act of justice: God wants not our money, but our faith."

Should any, who calls himself a minister of Christ, however dignified, distinguished, or denominated, read these lines of Ambrose, and catch a little of the tenderness, humility, and charity, which they breathe, and conceive more highly and more reverently of his office than he did before, and be stirred up to a measure of the same spirit, I shall rejoice that I have not laid them before the reader in vain. In truth, the ideas of the pastoral office were in Ambrose exceedingly serious, meek, lowly, and devotional. Have we not, too generally, great occasion to be

* Gen. xxxviii.

humbled, on comparing ourselves with this holy servant of God?

That good men, who see and feel the evil of the world, should be tempted to seek for solitude and retirement, is so natural, that one does not wonder at the growth of the monastic spirit. The true security against it would have been, to have attended more closely to the scriptural rules of secular conduct given to Christians, and to have exercised more faith in those divine promises, which engage to preserve the soul in the midst of the world. Such an attention and exercise would have led Christians into a far nobler method of serving God, and letting their light shine before men, than that self-devised one, which many took, of retiring altogether from society. Ambrose, I have already observed, unhappily contributed much to the growth of this monastic taste ; yet the following quotation shows, how serious and upright were his views, and how deeply conscious he was of the difficulties of the Christian life. “ I wish a cautious and earnest affection for the things of God were as easy to be attained, as it is easy to speak of it. But the enticement of earthly lusts frequently creeps in, and the diffusion of vanity fills the mind. To avoid these snares is difficult, to be divested of them impossible. In fine, that the thing is rather matter of desire than effect, the prophet confesses, in saying, ‘ Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.’ Our heart is not in our own power ; our thoughts by sudden incursions confound the mind, and draw it a different way from what we have determined. Who so happy as always to mount upwards in his heart ? How can this be done without divine aid ? Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee*.”

He who feels so strongly the power of that sin which dwelleth in us †, needs the light of grace to

* Ps. 84. Ambrose de Fuga seculi, C. i. † Rom. vii. 17.

conduct him. Nor was it wanting in Ambrose. In that age of declension, not of apostasy from the faith, the candlestick of Milan was possessed of as clear and steady a light, under the ministration of her angel*, as any at that time in the Christian world. Hear his summary view of the Gospel salvation: "God therefore assumed flesh, that he might abolish the curse of sinful flesh, and was made a curse for us, that the blessing might swallow up the curse; and that righteousness, pardon, and life, might swallow up our sin, our condemnation, and our death. For he underwent death, that the sentence might be fulfilled.—Nothing is done in the Gospel against the sentence of God, since the condition of the divine sentence has been fulfilled.—We are dead with Christ: why then do we seek any more the acts of this life? For we carry about us the death of Christ, that the life of Christ may also be manifested in us. We live therefore now, not our own life, but the life of Christ, of all virtues. We are risen with Christ, let us live in him, let us rise in him, that the serpent may not be able to find in earthly things our heel, which he may wound." The reader, who is well versed in St. Paul's epistles, will see how the spirit of them was understood by Ambrose.

The palm of heavenly-mindedness, in which the primitive Christians so much excelled, was still in the possession of many in the fourth century. The last chapter of Ambrose, on the benefit of death, is remarkable in this light. Take notice of a few sentences.

"We shall go to those who sit down in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because, being asked to the supper, they made no excuse. We shall go, where there is a paradise of pleasure; where the wretched being, who fell among

* Rev. i. 20; "the angels of the seven churches."

thieves, no longer weeps over his wounds, where the thief himself rejoices in the participation of the heavenly kingdom, where there shall be no more storms or vicissitudes, but the glory of God alone shall shine. We shall go where Jesus has prepared mansions for his servants, that where he is, there we may be also.—The will of Christ is the same as performance. That we may know his true will, he hath said, Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory. We follow thee, Lord Jesus, but draw us that we may follow ; no one rises without thee ; open to us thy good, which David desired to see, when he said, I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Show us that good, which in its nature is unchangeable, and which, when we arrive at heaven, we shall never cease to acknowledge and approve. There thy saints are freed from errors and anxieties, from folly and ignorance, from fear and terror, from all lusts and carnal affections. Let us seek him, and embrace his feet, and worship him, that he may say to us, fear not, I am the remission of sins, I am the light, I am the life : he that cometh to me shall not see death :—because he is the fulness of divinity.”

In his three books concerning the Holy Ghost, he proves his Deity, partly by express testimony, such as, God is a spirit*, the Lord is that spirit ; but chiefly by showing that whatever is said of the divine properties and acts of the Father and of the Son, is said also of the Holy Ghost.

In comforting Faustinus, who mourned for the death of a sister, he says, “ If it be said to the soul, thy strength shall be renewed, like the eagle ; why † should we grieve ? Why should we groan for the

* John iv. 24. It is remarkable what he observes of the fraud committed by the Arians on the sacred volume at Milan, in the time of his predecessor Auxentius, namely, that they erased this text out of St. John’s Gospel.

† Psalm ciii. 5.

dead, when the reconciliation of the world with God the Father is made by Jesus Christ? As we hold the benefits of Christ before all men, and before you, we are ambassadors for Christ, that you should know his gifts to be without repentance; that you may believe as you have always done, nor bring your faith into doubt by excess of sorrow, because Jesus was made sin for us, that he might take away the sin of the world, and we might be made the righteousness of God in him *."

In another epistle he gives an excellent view of spiritual illumination, and of Christ dwelling in the heart †: of which suffice it to say, that he has the same views and sensations as holy men have confessed in all times and circumstances.

An epistolary address to clergymen deserves to be read by persons of this order in all ages. "It is," says he, "a common temptation to the human mind, that persons meeting with some slight offence in the path of duty, are inclined to depart from it. In a clergyman such conduct is peculiarly lamentable. Satan labours by this method, if he can by no other, to offend them. What advantage is it to me to remain in the pastoral office, to be laboriously employed, and ill-treated, as if I had no other way of getting my bread? What, are worldly ends the governing motive, and do you not mean to lay up in store for the world to come?—Say not of thy God, he is a hard master; say not of thy office it is unprofitable. The devil envies thy hope. Depart not from the Lord's inheritance, that he may at length bid thee enter into his joy. Farewell, my sons, and serve the Lord; for he is a good Master."

His expositions of Scripture are liable to great exceptions in point of accuracy, perspicuity, and order. The fancies of Origenism seduced him continually into vague and arbitrary interpretations.

* Epis. 8. B. ii.

† Epis. 11. B. iii.

Yet is he true to the fundamentals of divine truth, and a rich unction of godliness will at all times afford to the reader that edification which is in vain to be expected from cold, but more faultless comments. The doctrine of predestination and election he evidently misunderstands : this part of divine truth had indeed scarcely seen the light since the days of Justin Martyr. On justification, he is more explicit, and sometimes uses the term in its proper forensic sense. The fathers, in these times, commonly confounded it with sanctification, though, in substance, they held the true doctrine concerning it. Ambrose is perhaps more clear of mistake, in this respect, than most of them.

Yet he appears to have given into the same sort of superstitions concerning the dead, which I remarked in the historian Sulpitius Severus ; nor is it to be denied, that he helped forward the growth of monastic bondage and prelatical pride, by giving occasion to others, who followed, to make use of his well-meant positions, for the furtherance of their own wicked designs. The same thing must, however, be said of his works, as of those of many of the fathers, that great injustice is done to his memory by frauds and interpolations. In the dark times, every error and absurdity seems to have come forth with the pretended patronage of some of the renowned doctors of antiquity. In one or two instances alone, works have been ascribed to him, which in clearness of doctrine and excellence of composition exceed the magnitude of his abilities, and I shall therefore defer the consideration of them at present.

But the lover of godliness will be disposed to forget his errors and superstitions, faults of the times rather than of his disposition, and will remember only the fervent, the humble, the laborious, and the charitable bishop of Milan.

CH A P. XIX.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL AMONG BARBARIANS; THE PROGRESS OF NOVATIANISM, AND OF MONASTICISM.

I HAVE but little to say on each of these articles, partly, because materials are scanty, and partly because where they are more plentiful, they are uninteresting. Let us, however, collect from them, if we can, an enlivening ray or two of the Church of Christ.

The Saracens, the descendants of Ishmael, afterwards so ennobled, or rather disgraced, by Mahomet the impostor, were at war with the Romans, under the conduct of their queen Maovia, who was a Christian. The emperor Valens made peace with her, one of the conditions of which was, that Moses a monk, who lived in the desert between Egypt and Palestine, should be appointed bishop of her nation. Valens ordered him to be carried to Alexandria, there to be ordained by Lucius. Moses, who knew the Arian character of that Metropolitan, said before him and the magistrates, and all the people, Stay, I am not worthy to be called a bishop; but if I am called to this office, unworthy as I am, for the good of souls, I take the Creator of all things to witness, that I will not receive the imposition of your hands, which are defiled with the blood of so many holy men. If you know not my faith, replied Lucius, learn it from my mouth, and judge not by reports. Moses, however, was aware of the Arian subtilties, and chose to stand by the evidence of works. I know your faith, said he; the pastors exiled among infidels, condemned to the mines, thrown to the wild beasts, or destroyed by fire, testify your creed; the eyes speak more strongly than the ears*.

* Sozom. B. VI. c. 38.

Political necessities sometimes restrain the passions of wicked men. Lucius was obliged to dissemble his resentment, on account of the situation of Valens his master, and permit Moses to receive ordination from the exiled bishops. His labours among the Saracens were crowned with success. The nation before his time was chiefly idolatrous: that his work was blessed among them appears from hence, that he kept them in peace with the Romans. But this is all the account we have of the fruits.

The Goths had long harassed the Roman empire with their incursions; but their depredations were made subservient to the progress of the Gospel. I have observed under the last century, that some captive bishops laboured among them with good success. And the work was of an abiding nature. Ulfilas, who is called the Apostle of the Goths, was descended from some of these. He, coming ambassador to Constantine, was ordained first bishop of the Christian Goths by Eusebius of Nicomedia. I have shown from a passage in Theodoret, that the Arians seem to have imposed upon him by an ambiguity of terms, in consequence of which he drew over his Goths to communicate with that sect. Certain it is, that this people held the Nicene faith for a considerable time, if we may credit Augustine. In the time of Valens, many of them suffered death from an idolatrous persecuting prince of their own. Ulfilas coming from his countrymen on an embassy to Valens, that he might induce him to allow them a settlement in Thrace, was on that occasion brought over to communicate with the Arians. That he was a man of superior genius and endowments, is certain. He civilized and polished this barbarous people, and first introduced the use of letters among them, and translated the Scriptures into their tongue for their use, omitting the books of the Kings, because he thought it might encourage the ferociousness of the Goths, who were already too warlike.

A copy of his version of the four Gospels is still extant, a monument of the ancient Teutonic language. It is with regret I leave the account of this great man so imperfect, whose labours and success seem to show, that the hand of the Lord must have been with him. But, however innocent he and his contemporaries might be of the Arian heresy, the effect of their communication with the party was what might be foreseen. The whole church of the Goths, by degrees at least, came into Arianism, and the consequences will meet us in the course of this history*.

Heresies multiplied in this century, chiefly through the various ramifications of Arianism, which have been explained with more than sufficient accuracy by many writers. Of the dissenters, the Meletians continued throughout the century. The Donatists still remained in all their ferocity; of whom it will be more convenient to speak hereafter. The Novatians have found in the candid Socrates, a historian who gives us some authentic information, having himself been acquainted with the son of one of their presbyters. In Phrygia and Paphlagonia, their church was in a flourishing state to his day. The general church, though surely right in its principle of opposition to the particular point of Novatian inflexibility, yet afterward abused the licence of re-admission into the church granted to offenders; and as discipline relaxed in various places, all kinds of crimes abounded.—The people of Phrygia and Pamphylia, being habitually an abstemious people, averse to pleasures, and to the indulgence of sensuality, were on that account the more disposed to admit these severities of Novatianism†. In this century, a part of them separated themselves still farther from the general church, by appointing in a synod, that Easter should be observed at the same time that

* Excerpt. Philostorgii apud Photium.

† Socrates, B. IV. c. 28.

the Jews kept the feast of unleavened bread. But as Agelius the Novatian bishop of Constantinople, and other more celebrated bishops of their denomination, were not present, a schism was formed, from this circumstance, among them. Agelius presided forty years over their church at Constantinople, and died in the sixth year of Theodosius. When he was near his end, he ordained Sisinnius to be his successor, a presbyter of the church*, of great learning, who had been instructed by Maximus, the famous friend of Julian. The flock of Agelius murmured, because he had not ordained Marcian, a man of eminent piety, by whose means they had weathered, in safety, the persecution of Valens. The aged bishop, willing to pacify them, ordained Marcian, and directed that he should be his immediate successor, and that Sisinnius should be the next bishop to Marcian.

Thus slender and scanty are the accounts left us of a bishop, who for so many years presided over a great flock in turbulent and trying times. On Marcian's succession, one Sabbatius, a Jew, receiving Christianity, was advanced by him to the office of presbyter, and in his heart panted after a bishopric. This man undertook to defend the innovation concerning Easter, which has been mentioned; and first, under pretence of greater strictness of life, he withdrew himself from the church, declaring that he could not conscientiously communicate with some members of the congregation.

In time, however, his views were laid open, as he attempted to hold separate assemblies. Marcian then found his error in ordaining so ambitious a person, and often said in his grief, that he wished he had laid hands on thorns rather than on Sabbatius. He took measures, however, to disappoint his ambition. Calling a council, he sent for Sabbatius, and desired him to lay open the reasons of his

* Socrates, B. V. c. 21.

disgust. The man informed them, that the difference of opinion concerning Easter was his grievance, as he thought that festival ought to be observed according to the rule of the synod of Paza. The bishops, suspecting his designs, obliged him to swear, that he would not attempt to become a bishop, and then decreed, that the time of observing Easter should be left indifferent, and that no schism should be made in the church on that account. Their design of preserving unity was laudable ; but it succeeded not. Sabbatius drew over a number of the simpler sort, and particularly those of Phrygia and Galatia, to his own Jewish mode, and got himself appointed bishop of his followers, in contradiction to his oath. The consequence was, a variety of divisions among the Novatians, concerning the time of Easter, and other frivolous subjects, and the crumbling of this church into contentious parties of different kinds.

Little can be said on this subject, but what must occur to the mind of a thinking reader. This most respectable of all the dissenting churches seems to have preserved, for a considerable time, a strictness and purity of discipline and manners ; but its essential characteristic of narrow bigotry, in things of no moment, gave occasion to internal divisions among its own members, which, fomented by unprincipled persons, must have perverted them much from the simplicity of the Gospel.

Monasticism continued to make a rapid progress through this whole century. It is not worth while to trace its progress particularly, nor to recite any of the ridiculous frauds, abuses and superstitions, which were connected with it. Self-righteous formality made rapid strides in the Christian world ; one single observation, however, of an author, who has recorded much of this trash with great complacency, will deserve to be transcribed. “ Most of these famous monks,” says Sozomen, “ lived to extreme old age,

and I think that this was a mean of facilitating the progress of Christianity. Antioch excepted, Syria was very late in receiving the Gospel, and these monks were highly instrumental in the work, both in that country, and among the Persians and Saracens." That these countries, which were before, for the most part, void of the doctrine of Christ, might receive spiritual advantage from these superstitious men, is probable, because some genuine piety was doubtless among them. That Galatia and Cappadocia, which had long before been full of the best Christians, should do so, I very much doubt*. Superstition, drawing with it something of real Christianity, may bring a blessing to countries altogether profane or idolatrous;—to a people already well evangelized, it can only act as a poison.

CH A P. XX.

CHRISTIAN AUTHORS IN THIS CENTURY.

Macarius.

THERE were several persons of the name of Macarius, who lived much about the same time. Hence it is as difficult as it would be uninteresting to determine to which of them the fifty homilies yet extant belong. Their antiquity is doubtless great, and they give no small specimen of the divinity of the times. These are a few of the favourite thoughts of Macarius:

“ Though a man be improved in virtue, he ought to look on himself as one who has done nothing, and should press forward to greater degrees, lest he lose the Holy Spirit by pride or sloth.—Man is capable of falling from that state of holiness in which he is, unless he preserve himself in it by humility, which is the infallible mark of a Christian.—Those who have not yet received grace, ought to do good

*: Sozomen, B. VI. c. 34.

and forsake evil by natural motives; but those who have received it, being possessed of love, need not such motives.”—He thinks, that men may fall away after the highest attainments, and that it is impossible for any to be certain of his salvation in this life. He observes, that to grow in grace without humility is impossible; that the soul after death goes immediately to that place, on which its love was fixed in this life; that whatever good a man does by natural strength, can never save him without the grace of Jesus Christ; that if the Holy Spirit does not produce in us the love of God, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. He is fond of showing, that we ought always so to labour, as if all depended on our own endeavours, and yet to acknowledge that we can do nothing without God*.

Certainly a serious and humble spirit runs through these homilies, and they seem to have been written by a man earnestly engaged in the divine life, and sensible of the need of divine grace. With such dim kind of light many humble souls, in the dark ages, groped in their way safe to the heavenly kingdom, though, like Macarius, poorly furnished with evangelical views and doctrines. These men saw and felt, however, the necessity of conversion, and the importance of a principle of divine love; and hence their obscure light deserves to be called mid-day, compared with the darkness of those, who put mere natural light in the room of the illumination of the Holy Ghost, and mere moral virtue in the room of divine charity.

Victorinus of Africa had professed rhetoric many years at Rome, and was held in such high reputation, that a public statue was erected to his honour in the city. In his old age, however, he was converted, and was not ashamed to confess the faith of Christ in public. An animated and instructive

Victorinus.

* Du Pin, Cent. IV. Macarii.

account of this is given by Augustine in his *Confessions*, which may meet us hereafter. At present, we are to view him as an author. He wrote against the Arians and the Manichees. In his treatise against the latter, he addresses his friend Justinus, who had been deceived by them, in this manner: "In vain do you macerate yourself with excessive mortifications; for after you have worn away yourself by your austerities, your flesh will return to the devil in darkness. I advise you to acknowledge, that God Almighty created you, that you may be truly the temple of God, according to the words of the Apostle, 'ye are the temple of God, and his Spirit dwelleth in you.' If you have not the honour to be the temple of God, and to receive the Holy Spirit in you, Jesus Christ is come, not to save, but to destroy you *."

The spirit of godliness, unquestionably, possessed this man; but his writings are, at present at least, very little interesting, though the passage I have quoted shows his holy taste. It were to be wished, that instead of subtilizing intricate controversies, he had favoured posterity with a plain view of the Lord's dealings with his own soul, which must, in a conversion so extraordinary as his, have been very instructive, and for the execution of which he must have been far more competent than for the invention or description of theological theories. But the humour of philosophical refinement guided far too much the best writers of these times, even such as Victorinus, who, being converted in his old age, was, probably, never well qualified to expound the Scriptures. If the reader regret how little of experimental divinity is laid before him, I join with his complaint: but my materials suffer me not to apply a remedy.

Pacianus.

Pacianus, bishop of Barcelona in Spain, was a man renowned both for piety and eloquence. Like

* Du Pin, Cent. IV. Victorinus.

most of this age, he exalts too much the forms of the church, and the dignity of the priesthood. Yet a strain of holy fervour seems to pervade his writings, and he combats the peculiar error of inflexible severity in the Novatians with just argument and charitable sentiments. “ If a man be subject to these miseries (of sinning away his privileges) let us no more accuse the mercy of God, who has proposed these remedies to our diseases; let us no more efface the titles of God’s clemency by an insupportable rigour, nor hinder sinners, by an inflexible hardness, from rejoicing in those gifts which God has bestowed upon them*.”

This is doubtless right; but when he excludes the Novatians from any part in the blessings of the church, because of their schism, he doubtless falls into uncharitable bigotry, in which both churchmen and dissenters too much abounded; though, I apprehend, in obscure regions this evil more prevailed. We have seen, in what Christian charity the general church and Novatians could live in the great city of Constantinople.

Optatus, bishop of Melevi in Numidia, deserves a place in these memoirs, on account of his judicious and able treatise against the Donatists. Of him, as of many other sensible writers, IT IS TO BE REGRETTED, that he did not choose a more useful subject. The case of the Donatists I shall reserve to the time of Augustine, whose character and conduct are much connected with the history of these dissenters. Of course, I have little to say of Optatus’s writings. A serious spirit appears in them; and a single passage, which is introduced, in the way of digression, contains matter so truly Christian, that the reader will think it worth our attention; as it demonstrates, that evangelical truth was far from being lost as yet amidst the thick mists of superstition, and that the true resting-place

Optatus
writes
against the
Donatists,
A. D.
370.

* Du Pin, Cent. IV. Pacianus.

of the soul in the doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ, the true humility, and real plan of sanctification, were understood, in some degree at least, by this author. Rebuking the pride of the Donatists, who boasted themselves to be holy and innocent, he says, " Whence comes this sanctity of yours, which the Apostle St. John dared not attribute to himself, seeing he says, If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. He who speaks after this manner, WISELY REFERS HIMSELF TO THE MERCY OF GOD ; for a Christian may desire good, and endeavour to walk in the way of salvation ; but he cannot be perfect of himself. For though he does run, yet there will always remain something to be done by God to perfect him ; and it is necessary that God should help a man in his weakness ; for He is perfection, and there never was any but Jesus Christ the Son of God, who was perfect. All other men are imperfect. It belongs to us, to will and to run, but God only can give perfection. Jesus Christ has not given us perfect holiness, but has only promised it*.

Dies about
A. D.
380.

Apollinarii.

The Apollinarii, father and son, were of Laodicea ; the father a presbyter, the son a reader in the church. Both were skilled in Greek literature ; the father taught grammar, the son rhetoric. Epiphanius, a sophist, was united with them in the closest intimacy. Theodotus, bishop of Laodicea, very properly fearing that the connexion with a Pagan might endanger their souls, advised them to give up his acquaintance. They despised the advice, and persisted. George, the successor of Theodotus, afterward attempting in vain the same thing, expelled them at length from Christian communion. Incensed at this, they set up a new sect, known by the name of the Apollinarian heresy, the principal mark of which is, that it ascertains precisely one point of the Arian

* Du Pin, Cent. IV. Optatus.

creed, by denying to our Saviour a human soul, and supposing the inferior divine nature, which he had from the Father, to supply its place*.

These men were doubtless persons of superior capacity. The son, particularly, was one of the greatest men of his time, in learning, genius, and powers of argument. His answer to Porphyry is looked on as the best defence of Christianity against Paganism. He it was, who, in Julian's time, endeavoured to compensate to the Christian world the loss of the classical authors, from the study of whom they were debarred by the persecution of that emperor. He wrote poems and dialogues, in imitation of Sophocles and Plato, on scriptural subjects. His translation of the Psalms into Greek verse, which remains to this day, is highly commended†.

What was wanting in these men? Humility. There have been persons in later times, like them, of good moral character, learned, acute, industrious, far surpassing many real saints, in capacity, and in usefulness too, so far as the externals of religion are concerned. Pride and self-confidence lead such men to speculate, where they ought to adore; to dispute, where they ought to pray; and to blaspheme, where they ought to submit. They treat with scorn the charitable admonitions of their pastors and godly friends, because they know languages and sciences better than their reprovers. Strangers to themselves, and to the whole work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and resisting all his godly motions, they cannot come to Christ, because they are unwilling to descend from their prodigious altitude into the valley of humiliation. Ambition in them must be fed; disappointed in the Church of Christ, they invent corrupt refinements, and seek to become heads of a party. He who knows that God taketh the wise in their craftiness, and revealeth himself to babes, will not stumble at

* Socrates, B. II. c. 46.

† Du Pin.

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such cases; and those few in all ages who stand superior to the rest of mankind in talents, and yet love genuine godliness, are only secured and hedged in by the Divine goodness, through a charitable course of discipline, often more severe than is needful for other Christians.

Didymus.

Didymus of Alexandria may be fairly matched with Apollinarius, in greatness of understanding and accomplishments. Though he lost his sight at the age of five years, he became so vigorous and successful a student, that he was renowned for his skill in philosophy, rhetoric, and geometry. He filled the chair of the famous school of Alexandria with vast applause. Origenism was his favourite system, though, as far as appears, he continued always sound, and I hope, humble and holy, in Christian doctrine. His treatise on the Holy Spirit, of which only the Latin translation by Jerome has come down to us, is perhaps the best the Christian world ever saw on the subject. And whatever has been said, since that time, in defence of the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost, seems, in substance, to be found in that book.

Gregory
Nyssen
banished in
A. D.

374.

Restored in

378.

Died in

379.

Gregory Nyssen, brother of the famous Basil, was the bishop of Nyssa, a city of Cappadocia. Basil, and two of his brothers, embraced a solitary life; but Gregory married, and lived in society. Under Valens, he was faithful, and had the honour to be expelled from his church. In the year 378, he was restored. He died toward the end of the century. In a catechetical discourse, he shows a sound judgment, in laying down different rules of argumentation with Pagans, Jews, and Heretics: To defend the incarnation of God, he shows that man is fallen, and corrupted, and can be recovered only by his Creator; and hence, that the Word who created him, came himself to raise him again. He shows also, that to be born of a virgin, to eat, to drink, to die, and to be buried, are not things

unbecoming the holy nature of God, because there is no sin in them ; and that the Divinity, united to man, lost not its perfections, any more than the soul loses its properties by its union with the body.

Once visiting Jerusalem, he was hospitably received by three religious ladies of note there, Eustathia, Ambrosia, and Basilissa, and contemplated with delight the scenes of our Lord's abode on earth. But he tells us, that he found there little of true religion, and returned sorrowful to Antioch, whence he wrote to the three ladies, and cautioned them against being imposed on by those, who desired to make a prey of them. Being asked by a friend, whether it was an essential part of religion to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he answered in the negative, and that a man had more reason to expect the Spirit of God in Cappadocia, where true piety prevailed, than at Jerusalem, where, it seems, religion was run to a very low ebb. Thus much for Gregory Nyssen, whose piety at least deserves our regard, though as an author, he is in no very high estimation*.

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EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN.

SOME other persons, who lived in this century, will, on several accounts, deserve a more distinct attention. I shall begin with Ephraim the Syrian, who was born at Nisibis in Mesopotamia, of Christian parents, and was educated with great care from his infancy. His turn of mind from childhood was devout, studious, and contemplative, to an extreme degree. And since few persons in that age knew how to unite the real Christian life with the practice of all the duties of society, it is not to

* Du Pin. Cave.

he wondered at, that the solitary taste prevailed much in Ephraim. It is rather a proof of uncommon good sense or charity, or of both, that at length he could be induced to quit his solitude *, and live in the great city of Edessa, for the sake of enjoying the benefit of Christian assemblies, and of rendering himself useful to his fellow-creatures. He wrote much on the Scriptures, and composed various devotional pieces in the Syriac, his native tongue ; which in his own lifetime were translated into Greek, and were much admired by all the eastern churches. He never was advanced further in the ecclesiastical state, than to the office of deacon, and once he took a very extraordinary method to avoid being preferred to the office of a bishop. He feigned madness ; and escaped. The reader will recollect something similar in the conduct of Ambrose, and may take occasion to lament the unhappy extremes of opposite kinds, which in different ages, have disfigured the Church. In Ephraim's days, the pastoral character appeared to good men awful beyond measure, requiring little less than angelical virtue. In our days, is not conveniency and love of gain frequently the principal motive, and decency of character the principal qualification ?

A noted heretic, named Harmonius, the son of Bardesanes, industriously employed himself in composing religious hymns for the use of the Syrians, in which he interspersed his father's heretical notions, and the philosophy of the Greeks. Ephraim, whose views of the fundamentals of Christian faith were strictly sound, and to whom the faith of the Gospel was precious, made himself master of the measures and tunes, and, in the use of them, composed Christian hymns, which were well received by the Syrians, and sung to the same tunes as those of Harmonius. He wrote also a discourse on the utility of psalmody, and exploded idle songs and dancing.

* Sozom. B. III. c. 16.

Let this be regarded as a proof of his zeal and industry. Not long before his death, he gave an instance of charity that deserves to be recorded. A severe famine raged in Edessa, and many indigent persons died for want. He waited some time, to see if any would step forth to relieve them * ; but finding little appearance of this, the compassion of his heart at length broke through all the unhappy monastic restraints, by which, even in Edessa, he had precluded himself from doing much good to the church ; and going among the rich and wealthy, he vehemently reproved their inhumanity. They did, what persons of the same character do in all ages ; they cleared themselves of avarice, but excused themselves, on account of the difficulty of finding a proper person, whose discretion and fidelity might be trusted in the distribution of their alms. Do you think me competent to this office ? replied Ephraim. All owned it without hesitation. “ Then I will undertake it.” Receiving their contributions, he caused three hundred beds to be brought into the public cloisters of the city, and the infirm to be placed on them, and he furnished them both with food and medicine. He took care also of strangers, and of those whom want had driven out of the country, and provided them all with necessary accommodations, till the dearth was abated.

How much is it to be regretted, that mistaken ideas of piety, into which young converts are very apt to fall, should have deprived the Christian world of so much benefit, as might have arisen from the talents and virtues of Ephraim ! In this occasional sally, we see the outlines of A GENERAL INFIRMARY, drawn and brought into practice by a monk ! That men, who mix with the world continually, should be covetous and selfish, will surprise no man, who knows human depravity. And what advantage did Satan gain, in these times,

* Sozom. B. III. c. 16.

when the best and most excellent men hid themselves from the world, and as much as possible attended only to the cultivation of private virtues! A strong proof this, of the low and reduced state of Christian knowledge. And as I know nothing more worth recording of the life of Ephraim, let us take a short view of his writings, in order to discover, if we can, the spirit of his religion. If I mistake not, we may see by a few quotations, which will serve instead of many, in a case where the character is exceedingly uniform, that his Christian love was much greater than his light, and that few men were better furnished and prepared for the very best use of evangelical consolation, if the theology of his time had afforded him easy access to it.

Speaking of love, he says, "Blessed is the man who possesses love, and with it departs to God; for He, knowing his own, will receive him into his bosom; he shall be a companion of angels, and reign with Christ. By love, God the Word came upon earth; by it, paradise has been opened to us, and an entrance has been shown to all into heaven. Being enemies to God, by love we were reconciled. We may justly say, that God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God *."

Hear him mourn over himself, and judge what a sense he had of natural depravity. "From my childhood I have been a vessel unprofitable and dishonourable. Warning others, I have fallen myself into their evils twofold. Wo is me!—whence can there be any refuge, unless the mercies of God shine quickly upon me. Nor is there any hope of salvation from works: While I speak of purity, I am thinking of uncleanness: While I am uttering rules for the conquest of the passions, my own are inwardly raging night and day. What excuse can I make? Alas! what a scrutiny must I undergo! I have had the form without the power of godliness.

* Ephraim's Works. Oxon. ☞

I fear, lest fire from heaven should consume me, as it did the two sons of Aaron. Shall I then despair of salvation? By no means: this the adversary desires, in order to destroy me. I do not throw away myself; for I confide in the mercies of God, and your prayers for me. -I pray thee, cast me not away. Thou knowest the wounds of my soul; heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed.—What shame will seize me, when those, who now count me holy, shall see me condemned, and when all secrets shall be laid open * !”

However defective his views of evangelical doctrine were, his ideas of that humility, which enters into the essence of the experience of them, are just and deep. “Vain,” says he, “is every endowment without humility. Pride labours to domineer over all, and lays a snare for every one in that way which is peculiar to each. The wise, the strong, the beautiful, the ingenious, are each exposed to danger from that in which they excel. The Lord, knowing our danger, hath set humility as our guard, saying, ‘When ye have done all, say we are unprofitable servants.’ Do those who labour abundantly in the ministry glory over those of a more still and quiet turn; behold, the Lord commends Mary sitting at his feet, as having chosen the good portion. Are the sedate inclined to glory over the active; behold the Son of man came to minister.—To be lifted up, is to have a fleshly mind; and if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.—When thou canst bear grievous things, against thy will, yet willingly, know that thou hast made proficiency in humility.—Through pride, the Pharisee was condemned; through humility, the Publican was exalted; with whom may the Lord deign to rank us in his kingdom with all the just †.”

Observe how divinely he exhorts, though his manner of speaking evinces his ignorance of the

* Id. 16.

† Id.

true distinction between moral and natural inability: “He might have healed all the wounds of our souls, and compelled us violently to goodness; but he does not choose that method, that our choice may have its praise. Do we neglect to call for his help, when he loves and pities us? Hath he redeemed and enlightened us? He hath given us to see and taste of his grace; that we might seek him without ceasing. Happy he, who hath tasted of his love, and prepared himself to be always filled with it. Filled with this love, he admits no other. Who would not love such a master, worship him, and confess his goodness?—From his immense height and the blessed bosom of the Father did he not descend to us? The Invisible became visible—O wonder, full of fear and trembling! A hand of clay, formed of the dust, smote the Creator of heaven and earth; and we, poor dust and ashes, cannot bear the contradiction of a word—What wilt thou say to Him in that day *?”

Speaking of the day of Judgment, he says, “An innumerable multitude, each raised from the dead, and clothed with his own body, exclaim, ‘Glory to Him who hath raised us and gathered us together by his loving kindness.’ Blessed is he, who shall be counted worthy to see that hour, in which all that loved the immortal Bridegroom are taken up into the clouds to meet him.—I remembered the day, and trembled, and, groaning, wept till I had no more power to weep.—My days have passed on, and my iniquities have been multiplied. Wo is me, my beloved! What shall I do in the shame of that hour, when my friends, who now see and bless me in this garb of piety, may behold me full of iniquity within?—O gracious Lover of souls! by thy compassions I conjure thee, place me not at the left hand with the goats; but by thy kindness, I implore thee, give me a contrite spirit, and purify

me, that I may be a temple of thy grace. Sinner as I am, I knock at thy door without ceasing; slothful though I be, yet I walk in thy way."

Will the reader hear the devotion of this broken-hearted saint*? "I beseech thy goodness, heal my wounds, and enlighten my understanding, that I may see thy gracious dispensations towards me. When my heart is infatuated, let the salt of thy grace season it.—Thou alone knowest, how my soul thirsts after thee, as a dry land.—As thou hast ever heard me, neglect not now my petition: my mind is as a captive, yet seeking thee, the only true Saviour. Send thy grace, that I may eat and drink, and be satisfied.—Distil one drop of thy love, that it may burn as liquid fire in my soul, and consume its thorns, even evil lusts †."

Were I to quote the very strong description which he gives of his own sinfulness ‡, persons unacquainted with the power of in-dwelling sin might suspect that this man, who was remarkably strict and circumspect in his manners from youth, must have been a man of gross wickedness. For similar reasons, St. Paul, on account of the strong description of his internal corruptions, in the seventh chapter to the Romans, has been thought to have been speaking only of his life before conversion, though he evidently speaks of himself at the time of writing. It was deep humility of soul, and a large acquaintance with the propensity of the natural heart itself, which led both of them to describe themselves as so very evil. The difference is, that Ephraim's inferior knowledge of gospel-grace, prevented his attainment of that strength and joy, in which the Apostle abounded. Yet his faith, clouded as the grounds of it were, was sound. "I know that the multitude of his mercies exceeds the multitude of my sins.—In baptism he hath given me remission of sins; yet I need to be healed of sins committed after baptism;

* A6.

† M6.

‡ 4.

but he who raised the dead is able to heal me also *." Is not this the very frame of an humbled soul, bowed down with in-dwelling corruption? "I desire to rise, but cannot; the weight of sin presses me down. I see, but I walk in much darkness. I move my hand, but I am as a paralytic †."

In his last will and testament, his humility appears mixed with superstition and dejection of spirit. A mind like his, truly sensible of sin, and not fully and steadily discerning the Lord Jesus, its only righteousness, will flee to vain refuges. Thus Ephraim has some recourse to prayers and offerings to be made for him after his decease. The value of clear Christian light hence appears inexpressible ‡.

His reverence toward the blessed God appears in a book which he wrote against those, who would pretend to search out the nature of the Son of God. In the second chapter § he says, "Unhappy, miserable, and most impudent is he, who desires to search out his Maker. Innumerable myriads of angels glorify with reverence, and trembling adore: while men of clay, full of sins, dispute without fear, concerning the Divinity. Their body trembles not, their mind is not disconcerted; but, secure and loquacious, they speak of Christ the Son of God, who suffered for me an unworthy sinner, and of his two-fold generation: nor do they feel how blind they are in the light."

The remarks which might be made on this holy man have been anticipated, for the most part. Undoubtedly the best state of Christianity is that of a saint, humbled under a sense of sin all his days, yet rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and bringing forth fruit with charity and patience. This requires an evangelical knowledge, both of the Law and of the Gospel. And an experimental acquaintance with this science is generally very simple and strong, in

* 4a.

† 4b.

‡ Tξc.

§ See Dr. Owen's Preface to his Χρησολογια.

both its parts, under the effusion of the Holy Spirit. On the declension of this, toward the latter end of the third century, a lower form of Christianity, even in real saints, obtained; and our history is still travelling through the twilight. The taste of this lower form was to know the Law in its spirituality, but not the Gospel in its consolations.—Of this form was Ephraim, one of the most holy men in this period; and I scarcely have found a saint, who had better views, since the days of Cyprian, unless we except Ambrose of Milan. But by far the greater part of real good men, in this whole century, and in the latter part of the last, lived comparatively, in bondage, looking to Jesus, sincerely, though confusedly. One person, however, was training up under the special guidance of God, in the latter part of this century, whose superior light was appointed to illuminate the next, as we shall see by and by. But how does the piety, the humility, the conscientiousness of such men as Ephraim, with all their abject superstition, rebuke the pride and carelessness and levity of many now evangelized in the head, and not in the heart, who trifle with the light, and live in sin, because they conceive grace to abound!

Ephraim
died about
A. D.
379.

I shall dismiss this Saint, after I have taken a little notice of one of his companions named Abraham, whose life he has written, and whom he admires extremely. For fifty years he lived an Ascetic, in the strictest observation of monastic rules, and confined himself principally to his cell; though the intelligent reader will think he acted most like a Christian in those intervals, when he left it; in one of them particularly, to which alone I shall confine my attention. There was a great desert in the neighbourhood of the city (Edessa, I suppose) in which the inhabitants were all idolaters to a man*; and though many presbyters and deacons had been sent

Abraham,
the Ascetic.

* See.

to them by the bishop of the city, yet they had all returned without effect, unable to bear the persecution of the Pagans. One day, the bishop observed among his clergy, that he knew of no person so devoted to God as Abraham, and therefore he would ordain him as an evangelist of these Pagans. At first he entreated him, but in vain; Abraham begged to be permitted to bemoan his own evils. The bishop, however, insisting on the obedience which he owed to authority, and observing how much better it was to be employed in the salvation of many, than of one soul only, Abraham at length submitted. He began his work with fervent prayer for the divine blessing, and having erected a church, he supplicated in it, for the conversion of the people. His next step appears not so proper; he threw down the idols and altars of the Pagans; the consequence of which was, that, with much ill usage, he was expelled from the country. He returned, however, to the village, and resumed his work of prayer in the church, to the astonishment of the Pagans. When these came to him from time to time, he began to exhort them to turn from idols to the living God, on which he was worse treated than before. For three years, he bore their insults and a constant series of persecution. His patience, however, and meekness, were admirable, and at length the people began to be softened, and comparing his preaching with his practice, they concluded that God must be with him, and offered themselves voluntarily to receive his doctrine. The saint, rejoicing at the event, desired them to give glory to God, who had enlightened the eyes of their hearts to know him. In fine, he gathered them into a church, daily opening to them the Scriptures. At length, when he saw them confirmed in the faith of the Gospel, and bringing forth the fruits of it with steadiness, he abruptly retired from them to his former solitude. The work, however, remained firm and strong, and the bishop

visited and exhorted them from the word of God, and ordained pastors from among themselves.

How much better would Abraham have been thus employed during the fifty years of his solitude! But such were the times. While the world proceeded in its usual wickedness, those who were best calculated to reform it had a strong tendency to live a recluse life; and false fear and bondage kept many from the pastoral office, who might have been its brightest ornaments. The mischief of this was inexpressible; the extension of the Gospel was checked; and every circumstance showed, that the Spirit of God was no longer poured out, in his fulness, among men.

CHAP. XXII.

HILARY OF POICTIERS.

AN account of the life of Hilary is delivered by a person, named Fortunatus, who wrote about two hundred years after him. This biographer, according to the taste of the age, which was still more credulous and superstitious than that of Hilary, is extremely barren in matters which really deserve attention, and is full of prodigies and fictions. The best account of him therefore is to be drawn from his contemporaries, and the ecclesiastical historians, and above all from his own writings. Of his life and actions little is known, that deserves to be recorded: yet so great a man merits distinct attention.

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He was born at Poitiers in France, and being of a very noble family, and distinguished by a liberal education, he was enabled to throw a lustre on Christianity after he received it. In his book on the Trinity he gives us some account of his conversion*. He seriously considered the folly and

* See Cave's Life of Hilary.

vanity of idolatry, and was led to conclude, that its professors could not possibly be competent to lead men to happiness. He contemplated the visible frame of things, and inferred an Omnipotent Eternal Being, as their Maker and Preserver. He observes, that happiness consists not in any external things, nor in the bare knowledge of the first principles of good and evil, but in the knowledge of the true God. By reading the books of Moses and the Prophets, he found his mind enlightened, and his judgment confirmed in these ideas *. The short but comprehensive account of God, in the book of Exodus, "I am that I am," affected him with admiration. When he was carried forward to the New Testament, there he learnt, that there is an eternal Word, the Son of God made man, who came into the world to communicate to it the fulness of grace. His hope of happiness was now enlarged: "since the Son of God was made man, men may become the sons of God. A man, who with gladness receives this doctrine, renews his spirit by faith, and conceives a hope full of immortality. Having once learned to believe the Gospel, he rejects captious difficulties, and no longer judges after the maxims of the world. He now neither fears death, nor is weary of life, and presses forward to a blessed immortality." In such a manner does Hilary give us the history of his own mind in religion. And when he enters on the subject of the Trinity, he gives an excellent admonition; humility at least will think so, though pride will object to it. It is, that the reader would think of God according to the light of faith, and agreeably to the testimony of God himself, divesting his mind of the meanness of human opinions. "For," continues he, "the chief qualification required in a reader is, that he be willing to take the sense of an Author from what he reads, and not give him one of his own. He ought not to endeavour to find, in the passages which he reads, that, which he presumed

* Du Pin.

ought to be there. In such passages as describe the character of the Supreme Being particularly, he ought at least to be persuaded, that God knew himself*." And in another part of the same treatise, he makes this observation: "The blasphemies of the heretics oblige us to do those things which are forbidden us, to search into mysteries incomprehensible, to speak things ineffable, and to explain that which we are not permitted to examine. And instead of performing with a sincere faith that which is commanded us (which were otherwise sufficient) namely, to worship the Father and the Son, and to be filled with the Spirit, we are obliged to employ our weak reasonings in explaining things incomprehensible." Every sincere believer, in every age, has had occasion to make the same remark, when called to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

His views of the Three Persons in the Trinity are remarkably perspicuous and scriptural. In speaking of the Holy Spirit, he says, that He enlightens our understandings and warms our hearts†; that he is the author of all grace, and will be with us to the end of the world; that he is our comforter here while we live in expectation of a future life, the earnest of our hopes, the light of our minds, and the warmth of our souls. He directs us to pray for this Holy Spirit, to enable us to do good, and to persevere in faith and obedience.

There will be no occasion to take any farther notice of his writings, unless it be to mention his

* I apprehend, if this method had been followed in all ages, there never would have been found any one to oppose the doctrine of the Trinity. Agreeably to this, it appears that Hilary, by the study of the Scriptures alone, had obtained and steadily professed the Nicene faith, before he had ever seen the creed of that name, or knew any thing of the Arian controversy.

† Thus owning his influence on the two leading powers of the human mind, the understanding and the will; not on one alone, but on both, agreeably to the views of the best and wisest in all ages.

addresses to the emperor on the same subject. Two he wrote with decency and moderation ; in the third, he appears evidently to smart under the wounds of persecution, and treats the prince with an unchristian asperity, for which no other apology can be made, than the same which must be made for Athanasius, namely, “ that oppression maketh a wise man mad.” In general, there is a proportion preserved in the church between doctrinal light and holy practice. Sanctification is carried on by the knowledge of the truth. And the superior degree of that knowledge, in the first and second century, will account for the superior degree of Christian meekness and charity, in those, who suffered for the Gospel, compared with the practice of the saints of the fourth century.

Hilary, after his conversion, was singularly exemplary in his attachment to the Gospel, avoiding any appearance of countenancing the fashionable heresies, and employed himself in recommending his religion to others. He was married, and had by his wife a daughter called Abra, whose education he superintended with great exactness. The gradual progress of superstition may be remarked from his case. He certainly cohabited with his wife after he was appointed bishop of Poitiers, and yet he strongly recommended his daughter to devote herself wholly to the service of Christ by a state of virginity. To relate his active employment in the Arian controversy, would be again to introduce a subject with which the reader has been already satiated. Suffice it to say, that he spent some time in banishment, in Phrygia, for the sake of a good conscience ; that he was at length restored to his see ; and that by his lenity on the one hand, which provoked the Luciferians, and by his constancy on the other, which offended the Arian emperor, he was yet enabled to be of signal service to the church, and was to the West what Athanasius was to the

East, the pillar of orthodoxy. The Latin church, indeed, was never so much infested with Arianism as the Greek; and France, in particular, was through him preserved from the reigning heresy. He died at Poitiers about the year 367. To him the great church at Poitiers is dedicated, and in the midst of the city is a column erected to him, with an inscription, at once expressive of the admiration of his virtues, and of the superstition of those who wrote it*.

CENT.
IV.

Hilary
died,
A. D.
367,
at the age
of 80.

CHAP. XXIII.

BASIL OF CÆSAREA †.

BASIL, surnamed the Great, on account of his learning and piety, was descended from Christian ancestors, who suffered much during the persecution of Dioclesian. His grandmother Macrina, herself a Confessor for the faith of Christ, and a disciple of Gregory Thaumaturgus, was eminently useful to him, in superintending his education, and fixing his principles. After a strict domestic education in Cappadocia, his native country, he travelled for improvement in knowledge, according to the custom of those, whose circumstances enabled them to bear the expence, and came to Athens. Here he met with Gregory Nazianzen, with whom he had a very cordial intimacy. At length, leaving him there, he came to Constantinople, and put himself under the

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* Divo Hilario, Urbis propugnatori, fidelissimo, assiduissimo, certissima, Pictavorum Episcopo.—“To Saint Hilary, the defender of the city, most faithful, assiduous, and certain; the bishop of Poitiers.”

† The epistles of Basil still extant, with the writings of his friend Gregory Nazianzen, and the two historians, Socrates and Sozomen, afford materials sufficiently ample for his life. Cave has given us a connected view of his actions, and Du Pin has reviewed his letters.

care of the famous Libanius. It is certain, that he was possessed of all the secular learning of the age, and if he had chosen to give himself wholly to the world, he might have shone as much, as superior parts, strong understanding, and indefatigable industry united, can effect. But his mind was under a spiritual influence; he found an emptiness in the most refined enjoyments of literature; even Athens itself, he called a vain felicity. He was led to seek for food for his soul, and in conjunction with Gregory, he studied the works of Origen; and some monuments of their veneration for that learned father are still extant*.

It will scarcely be needful to add, that, by this means, he contracted a taste for exposition, neither the most evangelical nor the most perspicuous. In his travels into Egypt he conversed with monks and hermits, and prepared himself for that excessive attachment to the spirit of Ascetics, which afterwards made him the great supporter and encourager of those superstitions.

It is my duty, however, to look for the spouse of Christ, wherever I can find her, although she may be disguised by an unsuitable and foreign garb. Julian the apostate had known him, when they studied together at Athens, and being now advanced to the empire, he invited Basil to his court. But the fear of God, and the love of heavenly things, which undoubtedly predominated in this saint, suffered him not to give way to the temptation for a moment. He wrote with Christian sincerity to the emperor, and provoked him by his faithful rebukes; choosing rather to live in Cæsarea a despised Christian, than to share in the honours and riches of the court, to which his uncommon endowments and abilities would have advanced him.

* Viz. The Philocalia of Origen, consisting of Scriptural Questions, and Origen's Comments, which these two friends compiled.

After some time, he lived in retirement at Neocæsarea in Pontus, and by his example, concurring with the spirit of the times, he not only drew over his friend Gregory, but also great numbers, to embrace a retired life, and to employ themselves in prayer, singing of psalms, and devotional exercises. And here, these two friends formed the rules of monastic discipline, which were the basis of all those superstitious institutions which afterwards overran the church. The want of a more evangelical view of doctrine, and of course of that lively faith which would animate and enable the Christian to live above the world, though in the midst of it, was, doubtless, the principal cause of the overflowing of this spirit among real good men in these times. To flee from society seemed to them the only possible way to escape the pollutions of the world, which they sincerely abhorred. Self-righteousness and ignorance fomented the evil, which gradually degenerated into a vapid system of formality, and at length became a sink of secret wickedness. But he, who should, in these times, suspect the generality of monks of hypocrisy and profligacy, would injure them much. On the contrary, the flower of the flock of Christ, in these days, is to be looked for among them.

While Basil was employed in founding monasteries in the neighbouring parts, he also caused hospitals to be erected for the poor ; and as he had been ordained priest before he left Cæsarea, he was useful in preaching up and down the country.

Returning, after a time, to Cæsarea, he distinguished himself by inducing the rich to supply the necessities of the poor during a grievous famine ; and all the world gave him credit both for his charity in relieving the distressed, and for his integrity in resisting the importunities of Valens the Arian emperor.

The see of Cæsarea being vacant, the authority

of the aged Gregory, bishop of Nazianzum, the father of his friend, was sincerely exerted for his promotion ; and to this see he was at length advanced, notwithstanding the opposition of the Arians. He was soon called to withstand the repeated attacks of Valens ; and though he was in the utmost danger of being banished from his see, he remained immoveable in the profession of the faith.

Let us attend a little to the pastoral character of Basil. He found that the church of Cæsarea, before his time, had been scandalously neglected in its discipline. Officers, who were a disgrace to religion, ministered in the church, and the subaltern superintendents* ordained men without the knowledge of the bishop, and without any just examination ; and many pressed into the ministry for mere secular reasons : it was reported that some were even guilty of selling the priesthood for money, the crime usually known by the name of simony. Basil reminded his clergy of the strictness of the primitive discipline, and of the care formerly exercised by the presbyters and deacons in examining the lives and manners of the persons to be ordained : and he made earnest attempts to revive the laudable customs, inveighing against simony as most detestable.

It would be tedious to describe the diverse contests in which Basil was engaged. Calumny, malice, and the domineering power of Arianism, afflicted him with various trials, in which his patience was unwearied ; and as his body became enfeebled by increasing distempers, his mind seems to have collected more vigour. Finding himself rapidly declining, after he had governed the church of Cæsarea eight years and some months, he ordained some of his followers, and was then obliged to take to his bed. The people flocked about his house, sensible of the value of such a pastor. For a time he discoursed piously to those who were about him,

* Chorepiscopi. A sort of under-bishops in great dioceses.

and sealed his last breath with the ejaculation,
 “ Into thy hands I commend my spirit !”

CENT.
 IV.

It is much to be lamented, that a man so sincerely pious, so profoundly learned, and of so elegant and accomplished a genius, should have suffered so much, both in mind and body, from the monastic spirit. But his excessive austerities broke his constitution, and left him, for years, in a very imperfect state of health. He died in the year 379.

Basil died,
 A. D.
 379,
 aged 51.

His doctrine appears, from his works, to be too much clouded with self-righteous and superstitious mixtures, to contribute materially to the instruction and the consolation of sincere souls, though it is evident, that he revered the influences of the Holy Spirit, and placed his hope of salvation in Christ Jesus. Hear how Basil speaks of faith. “ Faith, above all natural methods, draws the soul to a firm acquiescence in the word : Faith, which is the effect, not of geometrical conclusions, but the result of the energy of the Spirit *.” So clearly spiritual was his religion, with all its imperfections ! To this testimony of Basil concerning divine faith, as distinct from that which is merely natural, it may be proper to add that of Nemes de homine, c. 2. another Greek father, whose time seems not far remote from Basil’s. “ The doctrine of the divine oracles hath its credibility from itself, because of its divine inspiration.” On one subject, namely, the love of heavenly things in opposition to earthly, he excelled, both in precept and example. In this, the power of grace appeared in him through life, and even the whole system of his errors in divinity was connected with it. The very principle of the ascetic life was with Basil a supreme desire to live above the world. Those who understand the foundation of the Gospel better than he did, may find it not amiss to attend to such pathetic exhortations as these :

* Basil on Psalm cxv.

“ One says*, I will give to-morrow, to excuse himself from giving to-day. Alas ! do you know whether you shall be alive to-morrow ? Another says, I am poor, I have need enough myself of all my means. Yes, you are poor, you are destitute, but it is of love, of benignity, of faith, and of mercy. A third says, whom do I wrong ? I keep only my own. I ask you, from whom did you receive those riches, and whence did you bring them ? Did you not come naked from your mother’s womb, and shall you not return naked to the dust ? Whence did this wealth come ? from chance ? what is this but Atheism ? if you confess that you received it from God, why did it fall to your lot rather than to another’s ? God is not unrighteous in the unequal division of property among men. Why are you rich, and why is this man poor ? it is, that you may receive the reward of dispensing your goods faithfully, and that the poor may receive the recompense of his patience. When, therefore, you appropriate to yourself that wealth which belongs to many, and of which you are the steward, you are a robber.—We know not what necessities may happen. Can you make this apology, while you spend your wealth on a thousand superfluities ?—But I want it for my children.—But, is it from you, that your son received life ? is it not from God ? ought he, then, to hinder you from obeying God’s commandments ? The riches that you will leave him, may be the occasion of his ruin. Who knows, whether he will make a good or a bad use of them ?”—The pretences of those, who think to exempt themselves from doing good in their lifetime, by leaving their goods, by will, to the poor, he thus refutes : “ Wretched men, to practise no good works, but with ink and paper ! It seems, you wish you could have enjoyed your riches for ever, and then you would never have obeyed the precepts of the Gospel : it is to

* Basil’s Homilies. Du Pin.

death, it seems, and not to you, that the poor are indebted. God will not be thus mocked ; that which is dead is not to be offered to the sanctuary : offer up a living sacrifice."—It is certain, that those, who rely on Divine Providence, are like the springs which are not dried up by drawing from them, but send forth their waters with greater force. If you are poor, lend your money upon interest to God, who is rich.

Different vices predominate in different periods. If, by reviewing various ages, I can gain a more enlarged way of thinking, and cease to admire exclusively that in which I live, this will be one advantage of my historical travel. Certain it is, that the present age is remarkable for a selfish and narrow mode of conception, and a contempt of antiquity. How many, whose reading has scarcely reached farther than a Monthly Review or Magazine, are apt to felicitate themselves on their exemption from superstition, and to deride all monks as perfect fools? If we conceive a man in Basil's days, possessed of the same contracted spirit, and capable of foreseeing the excessively mercantile taste of the present race of men ; would not he be disposed to censure their covetousness? and would not the vice appear as ridiculous to such a one, as superstition does to the moderns? Is it not as absurd and foolish in its nature?—The wisdom of man lies not in satirizing the vices of others, but in correcting his own.

CHAP. XXIV.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

HE was born at Arianzum, an obscure village belonging to Nazianzum in Cappadocia, and came into

the world about the time of the Nicene council *. His father, of the same name, a person of rank, had been brought up among a particular sect, most resembling the Samaritans, who professed a mixture of Judaism and Paganism. To this opinion, as it had been the religion of his family, Gregory the elder was in early life extremely devoted. But marrying a lady of rank, and of sincere Christian piety, he was gradually induced to attend to the doctrines of the Gospel. Her prayers and persuasions were equally ardent. Gregory the elder dreaming one night, that he sung that passage, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and feeling an uncommon pleasure on the occasion, informed his wife of the circumstance, who exhorted him to comply with the call of God to his soul. And soon after, Leontius, bishop of Cæsarea, coming to Nazianzum, in his way to the council of Nice, Gregory the elder was encouraged and assisted by him, and then received from the bishop of Nazianzum catechetical instruction, and the ordinance of baptism.

Nazianzum itself had but newly received Christianity. The bishop who baptized Gregory the elder, was the first of its pastors, and died soon after. A long vacancy took place, and the town was overrun with ignorance and vice. Gregory the elder at length was appointed to the see, which he filled for forty-five years with great success among the people. His son, Gregory the younger, the famous Gregory, usually called Gregory Nazianzen, making uncommon advances in learning, in several seminaries, went to Athens, to complete his education. During the voyage, a remarkable providence

* Though I have consulted Socrates and Sozomen, yet the account of Cave is so full and circumstantial, and so well supported by original authorities, that I shall have little occasion to do any thing more than to abridge the life of Gregory, written by the latter, except to avail myself of the industry of Du Pin, when I make a few remarks on the works of this Father.

was made subservient to his conversion. A storm suddenly arose, and the vessel was for several days in imminent danger. Gregory lamented his want of baptism and of serious Christianity, and with vehement prayers devoted himself to God to be his for ever, if he would be pleased to spare his life at that time. When he had finished his prayer, the tempest ceased, and the ship was securely conducted to her port.

His acquaintance with Basil at Athens has been mentioned. Here also he conversed with Julian the apostate, and, with that intuitive penetration into character, which seems a peculiar gift of some minds, he foretold what a curse he would one day prove. See, said he, what a pest the Roman empire nourishes in its bowels! Yet Julian, at that time, had done nothing to justify such suspicions. He attended Christian forms; nor was he naturally savage or inhuman. The penetrating eye of Gregory discerned, however, the embryo of the apostate and the scorner, in his bold and fearless spirit of disputation, and in his presumptuous curiosity;—tempers in youth, which, if strong and predominant, and accompanied with quickness of parts, without special grace, seldom fail to produce remarkable fruits of impiety in maturer age, and are rather cherished than damped by sobriety of manners and intenseness of application. Pride converts every specious virtue into nourishment for herself; and Satan knows no agent in the world so proper as pride for the promotion of his kingdom of darkness.

After his baptism, he felt himself strongly inclined to the ascetic life, but was, though reluctant, made a presbyter by his father. The old man, better versed in prayer than disputation, was once imposed on, by Arian subtleties, to communicate with that sect, while he took them to be what they were not, but was recovered from the snare by the arguments of his more learned son. The latter, after giving way

for a time to the monastic spirit of solitude, was prevailed on at length to return to Nazianzum, and to employ himself in a manner more worthy of a Christian, by assisting his aged father in his pastoral cares.

His friend Basil offering him the bishopric of Sasima, in his diocese of Cæsarea, and the place being very mean and obscure, the pride of Gregory was hurt, and for some time a coolness subsisted between the two friends, both of whom appear not to have possessed, in any great degree, the humble simplicity of better times. Their fondness for Platonism, and their accurate acquaintance with secular learning, had doubtless no tendency to supply the defects of their Christian views of doctrine.

Gregory rejecting the offer of Sasima, continued to assist his father, and had then an opportunity of enforcing a Christian duty, constantly allowed to be such in the primitive times, namely submission to the higher powers, as well as to give the most excellent advice to the governor of Nazianzum—to use his power with moderation. Some civil tumults and broils at that place furnished him with this occasion.

His father dying near a hundred years old, and his mother soon after, both of them persons of uncommon piety, Gregory was induced to go to Constantinople. Here, under the emperor Valens, Arianism was at its height, and Gregory preached to a few Christians in a sort of conventicle; but, growing popular and successful, he was at last appointed bishop; and at length, under Theodosius, he was confirmed in the charge. It proved, however, extremely uneasy to him, notwithstanding the kindness of the emperor. His liberality and integrity were indeed admirable, and his private life and manners were most exemplary. But the weakness of his body, the irritability of his temper, and his extreme deficiency in talents for government,

rendered him, notwithstanding the just renown of his incomparable oratory, unfit for so public a station.

The Gospel was, however, adorned by his virtues, and particularly, by the meekness with which he forgave a person who had been suborned to murder him, and who, having been baffled in his purpose by Providence, came to him in agony of conscience, and confessed his intentions.

While he was at Constantinople, the famous council was held there for the settlement of the peace of the church; during the course of which, Gregory, a man of tried honesty, but void of political refinement, found himself so much opposed by those who envied him, and his best designs so much misconstrued, that he entreated Theodosius to accept his resignation. His farewell sermon, in which he reminded his audience of what God had done by him from his first preaching among them, when he was attacked with stones by the Arians, is a masterpiece of eloquence, and moved the passions of the audience exceedingly. There is in it too great a show of eloquence, and too little of the Gospel of Christ.

A second synod being held at Constantinople, Gregory, disgusted with the treatment he had met with in the first, and being also afflicted with a very infirm state of health, refused to come, and expressed himself with unbecoming acrimony against councils in general. However, he exerted himself sincerely to promote unity in the church, and was unbounded in his liberality to the poor. In his time he was looked on as an admirable theologian. And indeed, in justness of taste, eloquence and secular learning, he was inferior to few; and these shining qualities, in an age more contentious than simple with respect to religion, procured him an admiration for Christian knowledge above his deserts. He died in the year 389, in his own country.

Gregory
dies,
A. D.
389.

His principal writings are his sermons. The first of them describes the difficulties and importance of the pastoral office, blames the forwardness of many to undertake it, and describes himself confounded under a sense of his insufficiency. In two other discourses he inveighs against Julian in a manner that discovers more of the orator than of the Christian. In another discourse, he endeavours to reconcile the minds of the people of Nazianzum to the payment of taxes. He observes, that Jesus Christ came into the world at a time when a tax was levied, to show that God is present at such scenes ; that he was made man, and did himself pay taxes, to comfort those who were in bondage, and to teach them to bear it patiently ; that by thus abasing himself he taught kings to treat their subjects with moderation ; that tribute was a consequence of the first sin, because war, the cause of tribute, was the consequence of sin, and a just punishment of God.

His warm and pathetic addresses to deceased saints were evidently little else than mere strokes of oratory. They were accompanied with the expression of a doubt, whether the saints understood what he said. He seems, however, to have strengthened the growing superstition, and encouraged that worship of saints, which he certainly did not intend, in the manner in which it was afterwards practised. Unguarded passages of this sort occur in other writers of these times, none of whom really designed to inculcate idolatry.

In another discourse, he protests against the too common practice of delaying baptism, which, from the example of Constantine, had grown very fashionable, for reasons equally corrupt and superstitious. Men lived in sin as long as they thought they could safely, and deferred baptism till their near approach to death, under a groundless hope of washing away all their guilt at once. He presses the baptism of

infants, and refutes the vain pretences of those who followed the fashionable notions.

His poems demonstrate a rich vein of genius and a sensibility of mind. Nor is there wanting a true spirit of piety. In the fifty-eighth are some excellent reflections on the falsehood of mere human virtue, the necessity of divine grace through Jesus Christ, and of an humble confidence in it, and the danger of perishing through pride and vain glory. An humility of this sort was evidently at the bottom of Gregory's religion; but I much doubt whether his less learned parents did not understand it, practically, much better than he. Mankind are naturally more favourable to gifts than to graces, and even good men are but too ready to suppose there is much of the latter, wherever there appears an abundance of the former.

Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, was not inferior to many in this century for unfeigned purity of faith and manners. But the particulars of his life are for the most part uninteresting. It is proper, however, to mention his zeal in tearing a painted curtain which he saw in a place of public worship. This seems at once a proof of his detestation of images and pictures in religion, and also of the weak beginnings of that superstition in the fourth century. In this place let us not omit to observe his very laudable spirit of beneficence: Numbers from all parts sent him large sums to distribute to the needy, in confidence of his charity and integrity. His steward one day informed him, that his stock was nearly exhausted, and blamed his profuse liberality; but he continued still as liberal as before, till all was gone; when he received suddenly from a stranger a large bag of gold. Another story deserves to be recorded as a monument of Divine Providence, the rather, as it seems extremely well authenticated*. Two

Epipha-
nius born
about
A. D.
320,
elected
Bishop of
Cyprus in
366,
died in
403.

* Sozom. B. VII. c. 27.

beggars agreeing to impose on him, one feigned himself dead, the other begged of Epiphanius to supply the expenses of his companion's funeral. Epiphanius granted the request; the beggar on the departure of the bishop desired his companion to rise; but the man was really dead!—To sport with the servants of God, and to abuse their kindness, is to provoke God himself, as the bishop told the survivor.

CENTURY V.

CHAP. I.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

SOME brief account of this renowned Father will properly introduce the fifth century to the acquaintance of the reader, because the transactions with which his story is connected extend a few years from the last century into this, and are very descriptive of the religious state of the East at that time.

CHAP.

I.

He was, at the commencement of the century, bishop of Constantinople, where the emperor Arcadius resided, while his brother Honorius reigned in the West: these two were the sons and successors of the great Theodosius. But we must look back to the rise of John Chrysostom. He was born at Antioch* about the year 354. His parents were persons of some rank, and by the care of his mother (for he lost his father soon after his birth) his education was attended to in a very particular manner. By her means, he had the advantage of being early prejudiced in favour of Christianity. Yet, being naturally studious of eloquence, he devoted himself to the care of that great master, Libanius of Antioch, who being one day asked, who would be capable of succeeding him in his school; "John," said he, "if the Christians had not stolen him from us." So great was the idea he had formed of his powers of eloquence.

Chrysostom
born,

A. D.

354.

He prognosticated right. It would be easy to produce abundance of instances of his oratorical

* Cave's life of this Father.

abilities. I wish it were in my power to record as many of his evangelical excellencies.

Having pleaded a little time in the Forum, he began to find a vacancy in his mind not to be supplied by secular arts and studies. The Spirit of God seems, from that time, to have drawn him to study the Scriptures, and one material advantage he derived from his master Diodorus, who was afterwards bishop of Tarsus : By him he was taught to forsake the popular whims of Origen, and to investigate the literal and historical sense of the Divine word ; a practice, in which he differed from most of the fathers of his times.

He contracted an intimate friendship with one Basil, whom, by a deceit, he drew into the acceptance of a bishopric ; nor is he ashamed to justify himself in doing evil that good may come *. We have seen the deliberate fraud practised by Ambrose to avoid a bishopric †. And I find Chrysostom, in his exposition of the second chapter of the epistle to the Galatians, supposes, that both Paul and Peter were laudably engaged in fraud, because their views were charitable and pious. We shall afterwards have occasion to consider this matter a little more fully, when we come to the controversy between Jerom and Augustine on the subject. At present, suffice it to observe, that the decline in doctrine had evidently produced a decline in ethics ; that the examples of men, otherwise so justly reputable, as Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Jerom ‡, must have had a pernicious effect on Christian morals ; and that the growth of austere superstition was unfavourable to truth and integrity.

Notwithstanding the entreaties of his pious

* Sacerdotio, B. I.

† See page 175 of this Volume.

‡ The reader will carefully observe, that Augustine is not involved in this censure, in the least degree. Let it be observed also, that these pious frauds had no connexion with the love of lucre, and arose more properly from superstition, than from hypocrisy.

mother, he lived in monastic austerities for some time; after which, Flavian, bishop of Antioch, promoted him to the office of presbyter in his diocese. About the year 379, a sedition broke out at Antioch, on account of taxes, and the people dragged about the streets the statues of Theodosius, and of his excellent lady Flaccilla, and of their two sons, in contempt. But finding afterwards the danger of the emperor's resentment, this inconstant and turbulent people were in the greatest distress. Antioch had ever been very favourable to the name, at least, of Christianity, since the time that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. But luxury and the love of the world, were, it is to be feared, much more common in these times than godliness, even among the Christian inhabitants. About two hundred thousand citizens made up the sum total; and half of these were Christians. John failed not to improve the opportunity. Serious as he himself was in Christian views, so far as he understood them, and excellent as a preacher of the law, he exhorted them to repentance, and very properly made the awful suspense they were then in, an instructive emblem of our expectation of the day of judgment. Hymns and litanies were composed to solicit God to move the heart of the emperor to pity; and many, who had never attended the house of God, and had spent their whole time in the theatre, now joined in divine worship with much earnestness and assiduity. Flavian the bishop, though aged and infirm, undertook a journey to Constantinople to deprecate the wrath of the emperor. Libanius the sophist also did the same; but the generality of the philosophers hid themselves in holes and corners, and did nothing for their country in danger; while the monks left their cells, and flocked into the city, and entreated the magistrates and judges to behave with lenity. One Macedonius particularly * ad-

* Theodoret, B. V. c. 20.

CHAP.

I.

dressed the Commissioners, and desired them to admonish the emperor not to destroy the image of God, lest he should provoke the Divine Artist; which he might think would be the case, when he reflected how angry he himself was for the sake of brazen statues. Thus, even monks, who exhibited Christianity in a degenerate form, exceeded in benevolence and active virtue the boasted and boasting sons of philosophy!

The spirit of Chrysostom, in the mean time, was softened and overawed with the mingled sensations of pity and devotion, while he observed the severe proceedings of the courts, and the vain intercessions of relations for husbands and fathers. He was led to reflect how awful the day of judgment will be, when not a mother, sister, or father can arrest the course of Divine justice, or give the least relief to nearest relations; and, in his homilies, he with much eloquence and piety enforced these considerations on a giddy, unthinking people. Pastors may take the hint from hence to improve temporal scenes to the spiritual benefit of their audiences.

The generous and good-natured Theodosius expostulated with Flavian on the unreasonableness and ingratitude of the citizens of Antioch to himself, who had ever been as a parent and benefactor to them. Flavian, admitting the truth of his observations, and confessing the aggravated guilt of the city, pressed him with the divine rule, If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. And his pathetic and pious admonitions prevailed. Theodosius owned, that if the great Lord of the world for our sake, became a servant, and prayed for his murderers, it highly became himself to forgive his fellow-servants; and with great tenderness he solicited the bishop to hasten his return, and to deliver the citizens from their fears. In the mean time, the active charity of the monks and clergy had prevailed on the judges to

suspend their proceedings till they heard from the emperor; and Flavian himself returned at length with the news of the city being fully restored to his favour. These are some of the triumphs of the Gospel. Its mild influence on society, in the suppression of the fights of gladiators and other savage practices, and in the kind and liberal behaviour of emperors towards their subjects, even in times when true religion was at no great height, demonstrate, not only, that states act unwisely, when they venture to reject Christianity altogether, and to substitute mere ethics in its stead; but also, that it is the duty of governors and legislators, as much as in them lies, by positive institutions to promote the knowledge and influence of that divine religion.

In the year 398, Chrysostom, by the advice of Eutropius, chief chamberlain of the palace, was appointed bishop of Constantinople, being hurried thither by a fraudulent scheme, such as he himself had approved in like cases. The emperor Arcadius, a character of the most insipid insignificance, fixed in the metropolitical chair a person of great integrity, activity, and virtue indeed; but surely not through any wisdom of his own. John began immediately to attempt the reformation of his diocese. He put an end to a custom of the clergy of keeping matrons in their families, which caused much scandal; he censured their covetousness and their luxury; retrenched the expenses of the bishop's table, and applied the surplus to the needy; built a large hospital*

Made Bi-
shop of
Constanti-
nople,

A. D.
398.

* The superiority of Christianity, considered in an ethical and political point of view, to all other religions, may deserve to be an object of attention. We have seen great proofs of it already. It is difficult to prove a negative proposition; I can only say, therefore, that I do not recollect any such humane and beneficent provisions for the poor in the whole circle of ancient Paganism; nor do I remember any one of the philosophers, who was ever sedulously employed, by word or deed, for the lower ranks of men. True religion visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction. With justice might Ambrose, observing the liberality which the church exercised to the needy,

for the infirm, and put it under the most salutary regulations. Such ministers as refused to amend their lives, he suspended from their offices; and the widows who were maintained by the church, were admonished to abstain from their gay manner of living, or else to marry. And he pressed the laity, whose employments filled up the day, to attend divine worship in the evening.

The common people heard him gladly, as, for a time at least, they generally will hear, in all ages, a preacher who speaks to the conscience, though severely, yet faithfully, with an earnest desire exhibited in his whole manner to do them good. Even some of the Dissenters attended on his preaching; nor did he labour in vain in reclaiming heretics*. The Clergy, indolent and corrupt as they then were, opposed him vehemently, and watched opportunities against him. The wealthy and the great, offended at his plain reproofs, were as ill-disposed as the clergy. Chrysostom however persevered; nor did he confine his cares to Constantinople. In order to overcome the Arianism of the Goths, he ordained some persons of their country, to whom he assigned a church within the city, and by their industry he reclaimed many.

ask the Pagans, Let them tell me, what captives were redeemed, what hospitals maintained, what exiles provided for, by the income of the temples?

* A visible reformation of manners in a capital, which had long suffered under Arian impiety, and had fallen into a general relaxation of discipline, attended his labours. Persons, who hitherto had frequented the public shows, now came in crowds to public worship. Here he expounded various parts of the New Testament. He preached three times a week, and sometimes seven days successively. The crowd was so great, that to place himself where he might be heard, he was obliged to sit in the middle of the church, in the reader's desk. He reformed likewise the churches of the neighbouring provinces of Thrace, Asia, and Pontus. It appears that various churches in the East were administered with shameful corruption and profligacy, and several bishops, by the vigour of Chrysostom's zeal, were deposed.

He himself often preached there, and prevailed on others of the clergy to do the same. He made liberal and active attempts to spread the Gospel among barbarous nations, though the troubles which afterwards befel him, must have checked both these and other Christian designs *.

In an age of luxury and extreme relaxation of discipline, it might be expected that the uprightness and inflexible integrity of Chrysostom would expose him to many inconveniences. During the negligent administration of his predecessor Nectarius the successor of Gregory Nazianzen, a remarkable alteration for the worse, in point of discipline, had taken place. There had been a presbyter, whose special office it was to receive the confession of penitents, and by his authority they were admitted to the communion. Superstition, most probably, had guided too much the formalities of this discipline; but profaneness was still worse, and the Lord's Supper was now open to all sorts of characters, no other rules being prescribed than what men chose to impose on themselves. It was not in the power of Chrysostom, in a metropolis so dissolute, and so much under the secular influence, to restore the discipline of the church in this respect. What was wanting, he supplied by preaching with the most laudable energy, and he exhorted men to repent again and again, and then to attend the Lord's Supper. He was evidently speaking of private, not of public penitence. Yet his expressions were perversely interpreted by two sorts of men, of very opposite characters, the Novatians, and the more dissolute persons of the general church. The former still maintained their favourite point, of never receiving the lapsed at all: the latter accused him of giving a license to sin. Yet if the distinction between private and public penitence be attended to, the innocence of Chrysostom's expres-

* Fleury, B. XX. 40. Sozom. B. VIII. c. 5.

CHAP.

I.

sions will be sufficiently clear, and he will appear to have only exhorted them to repentance on the encouragement of the divine mercies in Christ, which offer pardon to repeated and multiplied transgressions. With what malevolence this great man was treated by the dissolute, may be easily conceived, when so grave a person as Socrates the historian, who had a partial fondness for Novatianism, expresses his wonder, that Chrysostom should have given such encouragement to sin, in his sermons, and have contradicted the canons of the church, which had been made with the excessive rigour that characterized the third century, and had forbidden the indulgence of communion to be granted any more than once to offenders *. Nor is this the only instance in which the zeal and uprightness of good men exposes them, in a malignant world, to the censure of opposite characters; of those, who carry the profession of strictness too far, and of those, who scarce pretend to any at all. Chrysostom was accused on this account, by the profligate bishops, and was also censured by Sisinnius, bishop of the Novatians in Constantinople, who wrote a book against him, and censured him with great severity.

Of this Sisinnius I shall not record what Socrates thinks it worth while to spend one chapter upon †. For, though he evidently desires to interest the reader in his favour, he records nothing but what tends to show him to have been a polite, facetious, well-bred gentleman, who made himself very agreeable to all parties, and was a contrast to the severity of Chrysostom by his engaging manners. He survived the latter, and lived on terms of amity with Atticus his successor: and I should with pleasure recite an account of his pious labours and success in the ministry, could I find any real proof that he was endowed with the spirit of the Gospel, and exhibited it in his conduct. Though the article

* Socrat. B. VI. 21.

† Chap. 22.

of dress is but an external thing, his wearing white garments, against the mode of the times, when the clergy were habited in black, was certainly indecent; nor is his saying, that there was no Scripture which required the wearing of black, a satisfactory apology.

It is not from such courtly characters as these, that reformation in the Church, in an age of corruption, like that at the beginning of this century, is to be expected. Chrysostom was, doubtless, endowed with many qualities which belong to a reformer. Socrates owns his extreme temperance, and at the same time blames him for the vice of anger, and the charge seems but too just.

This infirmity, too common to men of generous and noble minds, gave, no doubt, great advantage to his enemies, and concurred with various circumstances to crush the bishop of Constantinople. A synod at length, held and managed by Theophilus bishop of Alexandria, his determined enemy, and one of the worst ecclesiastical characters in history, supported by the influence of the proud Eudoxia, the empress, condemned him with extreme injustice. I shall not stain these pages with a detail of their iniquitous proceedings*. It is more to our purpose to notice his conduct under the severe persecution.

Chrysostom, foreseeing the effect of the storm which was gathering round him, addressed himself to the bishops, who were his friends, assembled in the great room of his house† “Brethren, be

* Among the other charges, he was accused of saying, “If thou sinnest again, repent again; and as oft as thou sinnest, come to me again, and I will heal thee.” This is the calumny already spoken to. That he spoke contemptibly of the clergy, and had written a whole book stuffed with falsehood against them; these also were among the articles of accusation, which, in general, betray the folly and malice of his enemies, and are more than sufficiently confuted by the piety and godly zeal, which appear in his writings still extant.

† Cave’s Life of Chrysostom, Pallad. vita Chrysost. p. 67.

CHAP. I. earnest in prayer ; and as you love our Lord Jesus, let none of you for my sake desert his charge. For, as was St. Paul's case, I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I see I must undergo many hardships, and then quit this troublesome life. I know the subtilty of Satan, who cannot bear to be daily tormented with my preaching. By your constancy you will find mercy at the hand of God ; only remember me in your prayers." The assembly being afflicted with vehement sorrow, he besought them to moderate their grief ; " for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." " I always told you this life is a road in which joys and sorrows both pass swiftly away. The visible scene of things before us is like a fair, where we buy and sell, and sometimes recreate ourselves. Are we better than the patriarchs? Do we excel the prophets and apostles that we should live here for ever?" When one of the company passionately bewailed the desolations of the Church, the bishop, striking the end of his right fore-finger on the palm of his left hand (which he was accustomed to do, when much in earnest) said, " Brother, it is enough, pursue the subject no further ; however, as I requested, desert not your churches. As for the doctrine of Christ, it began not with me, nor shall it die with me. Did not Moses die? and did not Joshua succeed him?—Paul was beheaded, and left he not Timothy, Titus, Apollos, and many more behind him?"

Eulysius bishop of Apamea answered, " But if we keep our churches, we shall be compelled to communicate and subscribe." " Communicate," returns he, " you may, that you make not a schism in the Church* ; but subscribe not the decrees ; for I am

* In this he doubtless acted with great propriety. Corrupt as the Eastern church then was, the corruption was rather in practice than in doctrine. And such a separation as afterwards took place at the Reformation, would have been very unjustifiable.

not conscious of having done any thing, for which I should deserve to be deposed.”

As Theophilus assumed a power, which doubtless belonged not to him, and as Chrysostom observed, it did not become a man that lives in Egypt to judge one that lives in Thrace, the bishop of Constantinople refused to own the authority of the court. His enemies deposed him for contumacy, and to support their views, they informed the emperor Arcadius, that he had been guilty of treason, meaning the affront he had put on the empress in calling her Jezebel; and it is not improbable, but that he had, in some of his sermons, compared her to the wife of Ahab, whom, in truth, she much resembled in pride and cruelty.

The people of Constantinople, however, who sincerely loved the bishop, insisted on his being heard by more equitable judges, and so strong was their agitation, that Chrysostom, fearing a popular insurrection, delivered himself up secretly to the officer, who came to execute the imperial warrant against him. He was conveyed immediately to a port in the Black Sea. As soon as it was known that he was gone, the whole city was in an uproar; many blamed the emperor, who, in so weak a manner, had given up the most upright of men to the malice of his wife and of Theophilus. The tumult was at

Good men by remaining in it might do a thousand times more good, than they would be capable of doing by deserting it. And so long as the doctrine itself is preserved sound and pure, by the continuance of holy men in the church, who in that case can remain with a clear conscience, revivals may be expected from time to time. Of this we shall shortly see a solid instance in the Western church, and such we have seen in the church of England in our own times. Separation seems only justifiable in the case of a total corruption and incurable malady, such as that at the time of the Reformation. Hasty and intemperate schisms rend the church into miserable fragments, prevent, as far as man can prevent, any great and general revival of godliness, and are strongly guarded against in the epistolary writings of the New Testament.

length so violent, that Eudoxia herself, frightened at the danger, pressed her husband to recal him, and even wrote to Chrysostom a letter full of protestations of sorrow and respect. Chrysostom was, therefore, restored to his bishopric. But the calm season lasted not long. A silver statue of the empress was solemnly erected in the street just before the great church of St. Sophia. It was dedicated with many heathenish extravagancies; and the people used to meet there in sports and pastimes, to the distraction of the congregation. The bishop, impatient of these things, blamed them from the pulpit, and with great imprudence began his sermon after this manner : “ Now again Herodias raves and is vexed, again she dances, again she desires John’s head in a charger *.”

The enemies of the bishop could not desire a greater advantage. And they improved it to the utmost. Numbers were ready to gratify the resentment of Eudoxia. And Arcadius, overcome by importunity, again ordered his deposition. He was suspended and confined : His friends and followers were dispersed, rifled, killed, or imprisoned. Edicts were issued, severely threatening all that refused to renounce communion with Chrysostom. It was the season of Easter, when the catechumens, who had been instructed, were to receive baptism. The friends of Chrysostom fled into the fields to keep the festival there. The emperor himself went out that day into a meadow adjoining to the city, and espied a field covered with white. These were the catechumens, who had been baptized the night before, and had then their white garments upon

* The rashness of Chrysostom in this affair was so great, that I could not easily believe this account. But I see the truth of the story is confirmed by the authority both of Socrates and Sozomen, and on consulting them it does not appear that any apology can be made for the bishop. He certainly mixed not the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.

them, being near three thousand in number. The emperor, being told that they were a conventicle of heretics, ordered a party of soldiers to disperse them. Several women of quality were very rudely treated on this occasion, and numbers were imprisoned and scourged. Receiving at length a warrant, signed by the emperor, to depart, Chrysostom exhorted the deaconesses to continue their care of the church, and to communicate with the bishop, who should be chosen, by common consent, in his room*, and he retired once more from his See, in the year 404.

Chrysostom
retires from
his See.

Arsacius, brother of Nectarius, being appointed bishop in his stead, the friends of Chrysostom, in opposition to the advice which he had given them, refused to submit, and formed separate assemblies, and were severely persecuted by the name of Joaninists. Among these friends was an opulent lady, called Olympias, who had honoured him abundantly, and appears to have profited much by his ministry. She had acted in the church as a deaconess, and was now banished to Nicomedia, whence she supplied the exiled prelate with money. Here she lived many years, an example of piety.

Arsacius is
made Bi-
shop in his
stead,

A. D.

404.

Chrysostom himself was conveyed to Cucusus in Armenia, a barren cold region, infested with robbery, and mournfully marked already with the murder of Paul, the former bishop of Constantinople. His journey to this place was attended with many grievous hardships, though sweetened with the compassionate care of various persons, who keenly sympathized with injured innocence. At Cucusus, however, he met with very generous treatment. Here he preached frequently to a people who heard him gladly. A grievous famine raging in those parts, he was enabled, by the liberality of Olympias, to relieve the poor. And he redeemed

Chrysostom
is conveyed
to Cucusus
in Armenia.

* Hence it is evident, that the appearance of a popular election of bishops was still kept up at Constantinople; but it could only be the appearance.

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I.

many captives which had been taken by the Isaurian robbers. He had formerly conceived a plan for converting the Pagans which were still in Phœnicia, and had made some progress in it. But understanding that the design had met with a check, he again made vigorous attempts for the support of so good a work, and ordered sums of money for the erection of churches, and the support of missionaries. He seemed to recover his health for a time, but winter approaching he felt the usual effects of that season on persons of weak constitutions. His stomach had unhappily received much injury from the austerities of his youth, and never recovered its tone. The next spring he recruited, but was always obliged to observe the strictest regimen*.

Arsacius
dies,

A. D.

405;

and Atticus
succeeds to
the See.

At Constantinople, Atticus was chosen to succeed Arsacius, who died in the year 405, and the Joannites were still persecuted in the Eastern church. Chrysostom himself was obliged to move from place to place on account of danger from robbers, and, as he wrote to Innocent, bishop of Rome, who sincerely, though unsuccessfully, laboured in his cause, he was in the third year of his banishment, exposed to famine, pestilence, war, continual sieges, an incredible desolation, to death every day, and to the Isaurian swords.

His enemies, beholding with an evil eye, the respect every where paid to him, procured an order for him to be removed to Pityus, the very shore of

* This great imbecility was one reason why he had always dined alone, when bishop of Constantinople. It is well known, that to persons of his weak habit, the attendance at feasts and entertainments is one of the severest punishments. Chrysostom had still more weighty reasons for his recluseness; the sumptuousness of Constantinople was in a manner proverbial, and he thought it his duty to check it. If any thing can add to the wickedness of those accusations which drove him from his See, it is, that he was charged with pride for dining in solitude. Yet he had been very hospitable to the poor, and was an uncommon pattern of beneficence and liberality.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

the Black Sea. In his way thither, he was brought to an Oratory of Basiliscus, who had suffered martyrdom under Dioclesian's persecution. Here he desired to rest, but his guards, who had all along treated him with brutish ferocity, refused him the indulgence. Nature was however exhausted ; he had not gone four miles, before he was so extremely ill, that they were obliged to return with him. Here he received the Lord's Supper, made his last prayer before them all, and having concluded with his usual doxology, "glory be to God for all events," he breathed out his soul, in the fifty-third year of his age, in the year 407. The Joannites continued their separate assemblies, till the year 438, when Proclus, then entering on the See, put an end to the schism, by making a panegyric on Chrysostom's memory, and procuring an order from the emperor Theodosius II. the son of Arcadius, that his body should be brought back to Constantinople with great funeral solemnity. He, who in his lifetime, had met with so many enemies, was now universally esteemed and admired, and Theodosius himself sincerely bewailed the injury done to so excellent a personage by his parents.

I have formerly observed, that the corruption of Christianity was deeper and stronger in great cities than in the country. The bishopric of Damasus at Rome was an unhappy proof of this in the West ; and in the East, the bishopric of Chrysostom, in the beginning of this century, affords a lamentable proof of the same thing. Never was there a more striking confirmation of the truth of the Christian doctrine, the original and native depravity of man. How often have we been told, that whatever is said, in the writings of the New Testament, of the carnal mind, and its enmity against God, of the woe denounced against those of whom all men speak well, of the persecution which must be sustained by those who love the Lord Jesus,

belongs only to the apostolical age, or at least to the times preceding the era of Constantine, when heathenism prevailed in the Roman empire ! Behold, the empire is become Christian ; idolatry and all the rites of heathenism are subjected to legal penalties ; the profession of the Gospel is become exceedingly honourable ; and the externals of religion are supported by the munificence of emperors, and by the fashion of the age, even with excessive sumptuousness. Behold a bishop of the first See, learned, eloquent beyond measure, of talents the most popular, of a genius the most exuberant, and of a solid understanding by nature ; magnanimous and generous, liberal I had almost said to excess, sympathizing with distress of every kind, and severe only to himself ; a man of that open, frank, ingenuous temper, which is so proper to conciliate friendship ; a determined enemy of vice, and of acknowledged piety in all his intentions ! Yet we have seen him exposed to the keenest shafts of calumny, expelled with unrelenting rage by the united efforts of the court, the nobility, the clergy of his own diocese, and the bishops of other dioceses. What is to be said ? His successor Atticus lived long in peace ; and, by a cautious conduct preserved the good will of men in general ; though he had joined in the persecution of Chrysostom. Sisinnius too, the Novatian, had in a degree joined in the same opposition. Both these men, however, by elegant and affable manners, conciliated the good will of man, and seem to have passed through life without any persecution. Whether men are of the general church, or of the dissenters, it matters not : the favour or the enmity of mankind depends not on such external distinctions. What either of these two did in opposing sin, I know not ; nor is there enough recorded of them to fix their characters with certainty. With Chrysostom, who was evidently their superior in holiness and virtue, we have

seen how hard it fared. He was choleric, and too vehement, no doubt ; but he knew the importance of divine things, and was, therefore, much in earnest, and the best charity was, doubtless, at the bottom of all his zeal. If the world naturally loved what was good, could it not have thrown a candid veil over one fault, the frequent attendant of the most upright minds ? Should it lavish its favours on men of ambiguous virtue and pusillanimous prudence ? Certainly it seeth not as God seeth ; it loves flattery and approves the decent appearance of virtue ; not plain truth, not genuine virtue. Such seems the just conclusion from the case : real godliness, under Christian as well as heathen governments, is hated, dreaded, and persecuted. And the important doctrine of our native depravity is confirmed by such events, and proves itself to the senses of mankind.

I miss my aim in this history, if I show not the constant connexion between the doctrines of the Gospel and holy practice. This connexion is sufficiently plain in the history of Chrysostom : though, had he known divine truth more exactly, and entered more experimentally into the spirit of the Gospel, he would have been more humble, and would have known better how to govern his own temper.

This great man, however, **THOUGH DEAD, YET SPEAKS** by his works. He laboured much in expounding the Scriptures, and though not copious in the exhibition of evangelical truth, still he every where shows that he loved it*. On those words of the Apostle, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, he says, “What a saying !—what mind can comprehend it ? He made a just person a sinner, that he might make sinners just. But the Apostle’s language is still stronger : He doth not say, he made him a sinner, but sin,—that

* Hom. 2, on 2d Epis. to Cor. chap. v.

we might be made, not righteous, but righteousness, even the righteousness of God. For it is of God, since not of works (which would require spotless perfection) but by grace we are justified, where all sin is blotted out." Here is a plain testimony to the Christian doctrine of justification, and under this shelter, this holy man, no doubt, found rest for his own soul.

Those who think every thing too much which is bestowed on a minister of Christ, may read a just defence of the maintenance of pastors, and a proper rebuke of their own uncharitableness, in his comment on Philippians, chapter the eleventh. On the fourth chapter of Thessalonians, in opening the Apostle's direction against fornication, he forcibly rebukes the prudential avarice of many parents, who protract the marriage of their sons, till they are far advanced in life. In the mean time they are led into various temptations; and if they do marry afterwards, are too much corrupted by vicious habits, to behave with that decorum in the marriage-state, which they might have done in more early life. He recommends, therefore, early marriages; and the advice deserves the more attention, as coming from a man, who often expresses his admiration of the monastic life, which, however, he does without throwing any reproach on matrimony.

In occasionally speaking of that passage of St. Paul to the Romans, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth*," he introduces the doctrine of free-will, in the same manner as most of the fathers did, who spake of it at all, from the days of Justin, and observes, that the whole is said to be of God, because the greatest part is. So hard pressed is he with the plain words of the Apostle, which are directly opposite to the system he had imbibed. But Platonic philosophy had done this mischief to

* In his exposition on Hebrews, 7th chapter.

the Church, to the great hurt of Christian faith and humility*.

The chief use of his Treatise on the Priesthood, is to excite in young minds a serious awe with respect to the danger of miscarrying in an office so important and so sacred, and to check the levity and presumption with which so many undertake it! He lays down, however, some good views of the difficulty of steering clear of extremes, in suiting instructions to particular cases, in checking impertinent curiosity, and in directing the people to useful objects.

The practical views of this writer, so far as they relate to the regulation of the conduct, are the most striking. Having lived in two great imperial cities, where plays and shows were very frequent, he earnestly inveighed against those disorders. He calls the stage an academy of incontinence. "What harm, say you, is there in going to a play? Is that sufficient to keep one from the Communion? I ask you, can there be a more shameless sin, than to come to the holy table defiled with adultery? Hear the words of him who is to be our Judge. Jesus Christ saith, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. What can be said of those, who passionately spend whole days in those places, in looking on women of ill fame: with what face will they pretend to say, they did not behold them to lust after them.—They see women adorned on purpose to inspire lust. If, in the church itself, where Psalms are sung, the Scripture is read, and the fear of the Almighty appears, lust will creep in like a

* It may be worth while just to mention, that he pathetically rebukes the sloth and negligence of parents and masters, who would throw all the work of instruction on ministers, and do nothing themselves for the spiritual benefit of their household. A plain thought, but how true at this day!

thief, how shall the frequenters of the stage* overcome the motions of concupiscence?

C H A P. II.

AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS ABRIDGED.

CHAP.
II.

FROM the latter end of the third century to the former part of the fifth, we have seen a gradual declension of godliness; and when we view, in the West, the increase of monastic darkness and superstition; in the East, the same evils to a still greater degree, attended with such an augmentation of iniquity, that even where all the formalities of godliness are preserved, the power of it is hated and persecuted, in the same manner as by Pagans; in fine, when the vestiges of Christian truth are scarcely discernible, we shall not be far amiss in pronouncing, that, in such a state of Religion, the wholesome effects of the first effusion of the Spirit of God are brought to a close.

It is evident, that real Christianity, notwithstanding its nominal increase under Christian emperors, must soon have been extinct, if God had not interposed with a second great effusion of his Spirit. He did so in the course of the fifth century, and the Church rose again from its ruins in one part at least of the Empire †.

* Balls and public meetings of entertainment are as much the objects of his indignation as plays. Games of chance also he represents as the occasions of blasphemies, losses, anger, quarrels, and all manner of crimes. Du Pin. Chrysostom.

The truth is, men who really fear God, in all ages have been united against these things; and for this reason, which is felt by them, though not by others, namely, that they have too serious a conflict with indwelling sin, to give themselves up to external incitements of evil.

† The Western, as will appear in the course of the narrative.

It behoves us to attend to this gracious display of divine goodness; and for this purpose, we must look back into the last century, to trace the secret springs of this dispensation. They particularly involve the private life of Augustine, bishop of Hippo. He was the great instrument of reviving the knowledge of evangelical truth. By a very remarkable work of divine grace on his own soul, he was qualified to contend with the growing corruptions. It is a happy circumstance, that we have, in his Confessions, a large and distinct account of his own conversion. And who could relate it like himself?—I proceed to give an account of these Confessions: the propriety and importance of so long a detail will afterwards appear*.

AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS ABRIDGED.

BOOK I.

THOU art great, O Lord, and most worthy to be praised; great is thy power, and of thy wisdom there is no end. A man, a portion of thy creation, wishes to praise thee, a man carrying about him his mortality, carrying about him the evidences of his sin, and a testimony that thou resistest the proud; even such a man wishes to praise thee. Thou excitest him, that he should delight to praise thee. For thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless till it find rest in thee.

Who shall give me to rest in thee? that thou mayest come into my heart, and inebriate it, that I may forget my own evils, and embrace thee, my

* The life of this great man was written by Possidius, sometimes called Possidonius, a pious presbyter of his diocese, afterwards bishop of Calama. Though poorly written, it yet deserves to be mentioned, as it confirms the authenticity of the historical parts of the Confessions. Augustine was born in the city of Tagasta in Numidia, of creditable parents. His father, Patricius, continued a Pagan till near his death; his mother, Monica was renowned for Christian piety. At the time of his full conversion to the Gospel he was upwards of thirty years of age.

POSSID. LIFE OF AUGUST.

only good? What art thou to me? Pity me, that I may speak. What am I to thee, that thou shouldst command me to love thee, and be displeased with me, if I do not, and threaten me with the greatest miseries? Is that itself a small misery, to be destitute of the love of thee? Alas! alas! tell me, by thy compassions, O Lord, my God, what thou art to me? SAY UNTO MY SOUL, I AM THY SALVATION. So speak, that I may hear. Behold! the ears of my heart are before thee, O Lord; open them, and SAY UNTO MY SOUL, I AM THY SALVATION. May I run after this voice, and apprehend thee. HIDE NOT THY FACE FROM ME. May I die*, that I may see it, lest I die indeed. My soul is a habitation too narrow for thy entrance; do thou enlarge it. It is in ruins; do thou repair it. It has what must offend thine eyes, I know and must confess: But who shall cleanse it! or to whom shall I cry but to thee? CLEANSE ME FROM MY SECRET FAULTS, AND KEEP ME FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SINS. I BELIEVE, AND THEREFORE SPEAK. O Lord, thou knowest: Have not I confessed to thee my sins, and hast not thou pardoned the iniquity of my heart? I will not contend in judgment with thee, who art truth itself: for I would not deceive myself. I will not contend in judgment with thee, for if thou Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who can stand †?

But, suffer me to speak, who am dust and ashes. Suffer me to speak, because I address thy mercy, and not the scornfulness of proud men. Perhaps thou deridest the simplicity of my thoughts, yet wilt thou turn and exercise compassion upon me. What else would I say, O Lord, my God, than that I

* He seems to wish to undergo any mortification, even loss of life itself, rather than lose the enjoyment of his God.

† It is obvious to observe, how a mind like Augustine's altogether resting on grace, and free justification, is freed from the solicitude of self-vindication in any part of his conduct; whereas, those who rest for salvation, in any degree, on themselves, are ever tempted to extenuate their sins.

know not whence I came hither into this,—shall I call it mortal life, or living death? Thy compassionate consolations supported me, and thou gavest me the nourishment of infancy.

Hear me, O God. Woe to the sins of man! Thou pitiest him, because thou madest him, and madest not sin in him. Who shall inform me of the sin of my infancy? For none is clear from sin in thy sight, not even the infant, whose life is only one day. Could it be right in me to solicit with tears, what it would be noxious to receive; to express vehement indignation against my parents and betters, if they did not comply with my will; and to endeavour, though with feeble blows, to avenge myself upon them? The imbecility of my infant limbs was innocent, not so the spirit of the infant. I have seen and observed an infant full of envy; pale with anger, he looked at his fellow-suckling with bitterness in his countenance. Since I was conceived in iniquity, and my mother nourished me in her womb in sin, where, Lord, where, or when was I innocent? But I pass by this whole time, no traces of which I recollect*.

What miseries, Lord, did I experience, when I was directed, in the plan of my education, to obey my teachers, in order that I might acquire that knowledge, which might be subservient to the attainment of false riches and honour? Yet, I sinned; O thou, who ordainest all things, except our sins; I sinned in rebelling against the orders of parents and masters. That literature which they wished me to acquire, with whatever intention, was yet capable of being applied to a good use. My disobedience arose not from the love of better things, but from the love of play, and from a fondness for games and shows. Behold these things with an eye of mercy, and de-

* The serious reader will not be inclined to pass over, in levity, these striking proofs of the sinful propensity of nature exerting itself antecedent to the growth of reason or the power of habit.

in my childhood did I sin by a vicious preference. Two and two make four, was to me an odious sing-song ; but the wooden horse, the burning of Troy, and the ghost of Creusa, were most enchanting spectacles of vanity. Yet why did I hate Greek literature, when employed in the same sort of objects? Homer is most agreeably trifling ; to me, however, when a boy, he was by no means agreeable. I suppose Virgil would be the same to Grecian youths, on account of the difficulties of learning a foreign language. Discipline is needful to overcome our puerile sloth, and this also is part of thy government of thy creatures, O God, for the purpose of restraining our sinful impetuosity. From the ferulas of masters to the trials of martyrs, thy wholesome severities may be traced, which tend to recall us to thee from that pernicious voluptuousness, by which we departed from thee.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, let not my soul faint under thy discipline, nor let me faint in confessing to thee thy mercies, by which thou hast delivered me from all my own evil ways ; that thou mayest endear thyself to me, above all the blandishments which I was following, and that I may love thee most ardently, and embrace thy hand with all my heart, that thou mayest free me from all temptation, even to the end. O my King and my God, may whatever useful thing I learnt when a boy, serve thee ; may what I speak and read and number, serve thee ; because while I was learning vain things thou gavest me thy discipline, and in those vain things forgavest the sins of my delights. For in them I learnt many useful words, though they might have been learned, abstracted from this connexion with vanity.

Alas ! the torrent of human custom ! who shall resist thee ? How long will it be, ere thou be dried up ? How long wilt thou roll the sons of Eve into a great and tempestuous sea, which even they, who have fled for refuge to the cross, can scarcely escape ?

Have not I read of Jove, at once the thunderer and the adulterer? What is this, but to teach men to call their crimes no crimes, while they have the sanction of gods whom they imitate? Terence introduces a profligate young man justifying his lewdness by the example of Jove, while he beholds on the wall a picture of Jupiter and Danæ*, and excites himself to lust as by divine tuition. SHALL HE, WHO SHAKES HEAVEN WITH HIS THUNDER, DO THESE THINGS; AND MAY NOT I, A POOR MORTAL, DO THE SAME? Yet I, my God, now indulged by thy grace to behold thee in peace, learnt these things with pleasure, was delighted with them, and was called a boy of promising genius. The motives of praise and disgrace then spurred on my restless heart to literary exertions. What acclamations were made to a puerile exercise of mine on a particular occasion! Were not all these things smoke and wind? Was there not another way of exercising my talents,—in celebrating thy praise? But, what wonder, that I departed far from thee, my God, when men were proposed to me as objects of imitation, who would blush to be detected in a barbarism or solecism, in reciting their own actions, though innocent; and at the same time might recite the story of their own lewdness, not only with impunity, but even with commendation, provided they did so with a copious and elegant flow of diction. O thou God of long-suffering, who permittest men thus to affront thee! Wilt thou not deliver from this horrible pit the soul that seeks thee, that thirsts after thy delights, and says, THY FACE, LORD, WILL I SEEK? It was by the darkness of libidinous affection that the prodigal son † went to a great distance from thee, his Father, gracious in bestowing on him thy gifts; and still more gracious to him when returning in indigence. How studiously exact

* Terence in Eunuch.

† Luke xv.

are men in observing the rules of letters and syllables, while they neglect the rules of eternal salvation ! Thou dwellest on high, in inaccessible light, and scatterest penal blindness on unbridled lusts. A man shall seek the fame of eloquence, while, before the crowded audience, he guards against the least false pronounciation, and guards not at all against the fiercest malevolence of his own heart, raging against his fellow-creatures.

In this school did I wretchedly live. To please men was then to me the height of virtue, whilst I saw not the whirlpool of baseness in which I was cast from thine eyes. For what more filthy than I, all this time, deceiving by innumerable falsehoods both masters and parents, through the love of play and amusements ? I even robbed the storehouses of my parents, either from the spirit of gluttony, or to bestow things agreeable to my play-fellows. In my plays, I often sought to obtain fraudulent victories, overcome by the desire of vain excellence. Yet, what should I dread so much to suffer, or be so ready to accuse, in another, if detected, as that very thing which I did to others ; in which, however, if I myself was detected, I was more disposed to rage than to submit. Is this puerile innocence ? far from it, O Lord. Change the scene only from pedagogues and masters, from nuts and balls, and sparrows, to prefects, kings, gold, and estates, and we see the vices of men, just as heavier punishments succeed to ferulas.

Still, O Lord, in my childhood I have much to praise thee for. Many, many were thy gifts ; the sin was mine that I sought pleasure, truth, and happiness, not in thee, but in the creature, and thence rushed into pains, confusions, and errors. I thank thee, O my delight and confidence, for thy gifts ; but do thou preserve them for me, and the things which thou hast given me shall be increased

and perfected, and I shall be with thee, because thou hast given me to be so*.

BOOK II.

I AM willing to recollect the scenes of baseness and carnal corruptions, which I passed through in my youth, not that I may love them, but that I may love thee, my God. I do it from the love of thy love, recollecting my own very evil ways in the bitterness of memory, that thou mayest be endeared to me, O Delight that never deceives; Delight happy and secure; thou which collectest and bindest together the dispersed parts of my broken soul. While averse from thee, the only God, I vanished into a variety of vanities †! For in my youth I even burned to be satiated with forbidden pleasures, and became as rottenness in thy sight, while I pleased myself, and desired to please the eyes of men.

What was it that I delighted in, but to love and to be beloved? But, by the excess of passion, the serenity of affection was not distinguished from the

* It is a very unjust surmise of Mr. Gibbon, to infer from Augustine's unwillingness to learn Greek, that he never attained the knowledge of that language; when he tells us, that he was doubtless a person of uncommon quickness of parts. His sloth and other vicious practices in childhood were, I suppose, such as are common to children. But few are disposed to look on them as serious evils. To Augustine's mind they appeared what they were, the marks of an apostate nature. Though, since the destruction of Pagan idolatry, there is by no means the same danger of reading classic authors, yet how justly blamable is the practice of leading boys so much to lewd poets, instead of acquainting them with the more solid excellences of many prose authors? A just selection of the most innocent and useful authors, and a perpetual comparison of their sentiments with those of Christianity, will not only guard against the poison of the classics, but instruct youth in the necessity and importance of Revelation. Schoolmasters, as well as children, may learn, in what we have seen, just matter of rebuke for exalting literary above moral excellence.

† The beautiful thought, thus diffusively expressed in our author's usual manner, is happily painted in a single word by the Psalmist, *UNITE* my heart to fear thy name. Psalm lxxxvi. 11.

darkness of lust. My tender years were hurried along through the whirlpool of flagitiousness. Thy displeasure was all the time embittering my soul, and I knew it not. The noise of my carnal chains, and the punishment of my pride, rendered me deaf to thy voice: I went far from thee, thou sufferedst it: I was tossed and agitated; and I overflowed with the ebullitions of lewdness, and thou wast silent, O my too tardy joy! At that time thou wast silent, and I wandered deeply from thee among many barren seeds of woes, in a state of proud degradation, and restless weariness. Thy omnipotence is not far from us, even when we are very far from thee; I might have heard thy voice, recommending a single life devoted to God, allowing indeed matrimony, and frowning on lewdness*. But I burst all legal bonds, yet escaped not thy scourges;—who of mortals can? For thou wast always present, severely merciful, mixing all my unlawful delights with bitter alloys, that I might seek for pleasure without alloy or obstacle, and not be able to find the possibility of this, but in thee; thee, I say, O Lord, who connectest pain with the breach of thy laws, who smitest that thou mayest heal, and slayest us that we may not die from thee. Where was I, and how long did I live in exile from thy house, in that sixteenth year of my age, when the madness of lust seized me altogether, and I willingly suffered the reins to fall from my hands? To the disgrace of our nature, this species of lust is every where tolerated, though forbidden by thy laws†. My friends took no pains to bridle me by the wholesome restraint of marriage;

* 1 Cor. vii.

† Would to God that this were not the case in Christian countries, as well as Pagan! If the reader feel himself inclined to treat with levity the serious manner in which juvenile vices are treated by the author, he will, when better informed of the malignity of sin, coddemn his own taste, not that of Augustine. The same contrast may be extended to the case of his theft, which follows.

their anxiety was, that I should acquire the arts and graces of eloquence.

That year I had vacation from my studies, being returned from Madaura, a neighbouring city, where I had begun to learn oratory, to my father's house at Tagasta. He, with a spirit above his circumstances, for he was but a poor freeman of the town just mentioned, determined to send me to Carthage, that I might have the greatest advantages of proficiency. Why do I relate these things before thee, my God, to my fellow-creatures, the few of them, who may read these lines?—That both I and they may consider out of how great a depth it behoves us to cry to thee. And what is nearer than thine ears, if the heart confide in thee, and the life flow from faith? Who did not then extol the noble spirit of my father, laying out so much money on the education of his son; a spirit, so much superior to that of many much richer citizens, who had not the heart to send their sons to Carthage? While yet he had no concern in what manner I grew up to thee. Whether I was chaste or not, cost him no thought, provided I was eloquent. In this year of vacation my passions were rampant without control. This pleased my father, who expressed his pleasure on the occasion to my mother. She had lately begun to feel thy holy love, and had been washed in the laver of regeneration. He was a catechumen in profession. Instantly, she conceived a pious trepidation on my account. My God, thou spakest to me by her, and warnedst me strongly against the ways of vice. Thy voice in her I despised, and thought it to be only the voice of a woman, which made not the least impression on my mind. So blinded was I, that I should have blushed to be thought less wicked than my companions, and even invented false stories of my sinful exploits, to obtain their commendation. My pious parent was prevented from encouraging me to marry, because,

she thought the usual studies, which I was now to enter upon, might be serviceable to promote in me the work of true religion. My father thought little of thee, but much of his son in vain expectations. Thus, while they both were too anxious for my literary improvements; I made progress in vice, and shut myself up in the darkness of sin, so as to bar up, against myself, the admission of thy truth as much as possible.

Thy law certainly punishes theft, O Lord, and so does the LAW* WRITTEN in the hearts of men. For, what thief can bear another? Yet, compelled by no want, I deliberately committed theft; through the wantonness of iniquity and the contempt of justice. It was not the effect of the theft, but the sin itself, which I wished to enjoy. There was a pear-tree in the neighbourhood of my father's vineyard, loaded with fruit, though not of the most tempting kind. At dead of night, in company with some profligate youths, I plundered the tree: the spoil was principally thrown to the hogs; for I had abundance of better fruit at home. Behold my heart, my God, behold my heart, which thou hast pitied in its deep abyss of sin. What did I mean, that I should be gratuitously wicked? I loved destruction itself. In the common course of wickedness men have some end in view. Even Catiline himself loved not his crimes, but something else, for the sake of which he perpetrated them. We are deceived by appearances of good, embracing the shadows, while we follow our own lusts, instead of seeking the substance, which is only in thee. Thus, the soul commits fornication, when it is turned from thee, and seeks, out of thee, that pleasure, honour, power, wealth, or wisdom, which it never will find in its genuine purity, till it return to thee. All, who remove themselves far from thee, and set

* He means the voice of natural conscience. See Romans, ch. ii. ver. 15.

up themselves in opposition, perversely imitate some attribute of God ; though even by such imitation they own thee to be the Creator of the universe. This is the general nature of sin. It deceives by some fictitious shadow of that good, which in God alone is to be found. But what vicious or perverse imitation of my Lord was there in my theft ? I can conceive none, unless it be the pleasure of acting arbitrarily and with impunity against law ;—a dark similitude of Omnipotence. O rottenness ! O monster of life, and profundity of death ! Could I delight in what was not lawful, merely because it was not lawful ? What reward shall I give to the Lord, that I can now recollect these things without fear of damnation ? I will love and bless thee, Lord, because thou has pardoned such horrible evils. I impute it to thy grace that thou hast melted my sins as ice is melted. I impute also to thy grace my exemption from those evils which I have not committed. For of what was I not capable, who loved even gratuitous wickedness ? I am sensible that all is forgiven ; not only the evils which I have actually committed, but also those evils which by thy guidance I have been kept from committing. He who, called by thee, hath avoided the evils which he hears me confessing, should not deride me a poor patient healed by the Physician, since he himself is indebted to the same Benefactor for his health, or, to speak more properly, for his being afflicted with a less degree of sickness.

O the unsearchable seduction of pernicious friendship, the avidity of doing mischief from sport, the pleasure of making others suffer ; and this without any distinct workings, either of avarice or of revenge ! We hear others say, Let us go, let us do it, and we are ashamed to appear defective in impudence. Who can unfold to me the intricacies of this knot of wickedness ? It is filthy, I will pry no more into it. I will not see it. Thee will I choose, O righteousness

CHAP.
II.

and innocence, light truly honourable, and satiety insatiable! With thee is perfect rest, and life without perturbation. He who enters into thee, enters into the joy of his Lord, and shall not fear, and shall be in the best situation in thee, the Best of Beings.. I departed from thee; I erred and strayed, O my God, from thy firm and upright ways; and in my youth I became to myself a region of desolation..

BOOK III.

I CAME to Carthage surrounded and agitated with flagitious lusts. After thee, O my God, the true bread of life, I hungered not; and though famished with real indigence, and longing after that which satisfieth not, I had no desire for incorruptible food, not because I was full of it, for the more empty I was, the more fastidious I grew. My sordid passions, however, were gilded over with the decent and plausible appearances of love and friendship. Foul and base as I was, I affected the reputation of liberal and polite humanity. I rushed into the lusts with which I desired to be captivated. My God, my mercy, with how great bitterness didst thou, in thy extraordinary kindness, mix those vain allurements by which I was miserably enslaved and beaten! for beaten I truly was with all the iron rods of envy, suspicion, fear, indignation, and quarrelling. The spectacles of the theatre, in particular, now hurried me away, full of the images of my miseries, and the fomentations of my fire.

The arts of the Forum also engaged my ambition; the more fraudulent, the more laudable. Pride and arrogance now elated my soul, though I was far from approving the frantic proceedings of the men called EVERSORES, who made a practice of disturbing modest pleaders, and confounding their minds by riots. Amidst these things, in that imbecility of judgment which attends youth, I studied the books of eloquence with the most ardent desire.

of vain-glory, and in the course of my reading dipped into the Hortensius of Cicero, which contains an exhortation to the study of philosophy. This book was the instrument of effecting a remarkable change in my views. I suddenly gave up the fantastic hope of reputation by eloquence, and felt a most ardent thirst after wisdom. In the mean time, I was maintained at Carthage at my mother's expense, being in the nineteenth year of my age, my father having died two years before. How did I long, my God, to fly from earthly things to thee, and yet I knew not what thou wert doing with me. At that time, O light of my heart, though I was unacquainted with the apostolical admonition, TAKE HEED, LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT*; thou knowest what was the sole object of my delight in the Ciceronian volume, namely, that I was vehemently excited by it to seek for wisdom, not in this or that sect, but wherever it was to be found. And the only thing which damped my zeal was, that the name of Christ, that precious name, which from my mother's milk I had learned to reverence, was not there. And, whatever was without this name, however just, and learned, and polite, could not wholly carry away my heart. I determined therefore to apply my mind to the Holy Scriptures, to see what they were; and I now see the whole subject was impenetrable to the proud, low in appearance, sublime in operation, and veiled with mysteries; and my frame of heart was such as to exclude me from it, nor could I stoop to take its yoke upon me. I had not these sensations when I attended to the Scriptures, but they appeared to me unworthy to be compared with the dignity of Cicero. My pride was disgusted with their manner, and my penetration could not enter into their meaning†. It is true,

* Coloss. ii.

† An excellent description of the usual effect of a little Scriptural study on a proud mind, which, by the just judgment,

those who are content to be little children, find by degrees an illumination of their souls; but I disdained to be a child, and elated with pride imagined myself to be possessed of manly wisdom.

In this situation I fell in with the Manichees, men, who had in their mouths the mere sound of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and were always talking of **THE TRUTH, THE TRUTH**, and yet formed the most absurd opinions of the works of nature, on which subjects the heathen philosophers far excelled them. O truth, how eagerly did I pant after thee, while they only used the word with their mouths, or repeated it in many huge volumes! But they taught me to look for my God in the Sun and Moon, and also in a number of splendid phantasms of their own creation*. I endeavoured to feed on these vanities, but they being not my God, though I then supposed so, I was not nourished, but exhausted. How far did I wander then from thee! excluded **even FROM THE HUSKS WHICH THE SWINE DID EAT!** For the fables of the poets, which I did not believe, though I was entertained with them, were preferable to the absurdities of these lovers of truth. Alas! alas! by what steps was I led into Satanic depths! Panting after truth, I sought thee, my God, of God, is given up to judicial infatuation and specious delusion in some way or other.

* The Manichees, so called from Manes their founder, had existed about an hundred years. It would not be worth while to notice them at all, were it not for their connexion with the life of Augustine. Like most of the ancient heretics, they abounded in senseless whims, not worthy of any solicitous explanation. This they had in common with the Pagan Philosophers, that they supposed the supreme Being to be material, and to penetrate all nature. Their grand peculiarity was to admit of two independent principles, a good and an evil one, in order to solve the arduous question concerning the origin of evil. Like all heretics, they made a great parade of seeking truth with liberal impartiality, and were thus qualified to deceive unwary spirits, who, far from suspecting their own imbecility of judgment, and regardless of the word of God and hearty prayer, have no idea of attaining religious knowledge by any other method than by natural reason.

not in intellectual, but in carnal speculation; for I would confess all to thee, who didst compassionate my misery, even while I was hardened against thee. The Manichees seduced me, partly with their subtle and captious questions concerning the origin of evil, partly with their blasphemies against the Old Testament Saints*. I did not then understand, that though the divine rule of right and wrong is immutable in the abstract, and the love of God and our neighbour is always indispensably necessary, yet that there were particular acts of duty adapted to the times and seasons and circumstances in which they were placed, which abstracted from such consideration would be unlawful. In much ignorance I at that time derided thy holy servants, and was justly exposed to believe most ridiculous absurdities. And thou sentest thy hand from above, and freedst me from this depth of evil, while my mother was praying for me, more solicitous on account of the death of my soul, than other parents for the death of the body. She was favoured with a dream, by which thou comfortedst her soul with hope of my recovery. She appeared to herself to be standing on a plank, and a person came to her and asked her the cause of her affliction; and on being answered, that it was on my account, he charged her to be of good cheer, for that where she was, there also I should be. On which she immediately beheld me standing by her on the same plank. Whence was this but from thee, gracious Omnipotent, who takest care of each and all of us, as of single persons? When she related this to me, I endeavoured to evade the force of it, by observing, that it might mean to exhort her to be what I was. Without hesitation she replied, it was not said, where he is,

* The Manichees objected to the characters of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, &c. on account of various actions allowed under the dispensation of their times, but forbidden under the New Testament, and thence formed an argument against the Divinity of the Old Testament.

there thou shalt be ; but, where thou art, there he shall be. Her prompt answer made a stronger impression on my mind than the dream itself. For nine years, while I was rolling in the filth of sin, often attempting to rise, and still sinking deeper, did she in vigorous hope persist in incessant prayer. I remember, also, that she entreated a certain bishop to undertake to reason me out of my errors. He was a person not backward to attempt this, where he found a docile subject. “ But your son,” says he, “ is too much elated at present, and carried away with the pleasing novelty of his error, to regard any arguments, as appears by the pleasure he takes in puzzling many ignorant persons with his captious questions. Let him alone ; only continue praying to the Lord for him ; he will in the course of his study discover his error. I myself, perverted by my mother, was once a Manichee, and read almost all their books, and yet at length was convinced of my error, without the help of any disputant.” All this satisfied not my anxious parent ; with floods of tears she persisted in her request ; when at last he, a little out of temper on account of her importunity, said, “ Be gone, good woman ; it is not possible, that the child of such tears should perish.” She has often told me since, that this answer impressed her mind like a voice from Heaven.

BOOK IV.

For the space of nine years, namely, from the nineteenth to the twenty-eighth year of my age, I lived deceived and deceiving others, seducing men into various lusts, openly by what are called the liberal arts, and secretly by a false religion : in the former proud, in the latter superstitious ; in all things seeking vain glory, even to theatrical applauses and contentious contests ; and to complete the dismal picture, a slave to the lusts of the flesh. So infatuated was I.

with the Manichean follies, that I drew my friends into them, and with them practised the impieties of the sect. The arrogant may despise me, and all who have never felt a salutary work of self-humiliation from thee, my God. But I would confess to thee my own disgraces, for thy glory. What am I, left to myself, but a guide rashly conducting others to a precipice? And when I am in a better state, what am I, but an infant feeding upon thee, the bread that perisheth not? What is any man, since he is flesh? Let the proud and the strong despise us; but we who are weak and poor would confess to thee.

At this time I maintained myself by teaching rhetoric; and without fraud I taught my scholars, not how to oppress the innocent, but sometimes how to vindicate the guilty. I lived also with one woman, but without matrimony. At this time I ceased not also to consult astrologers; nor could I be induced by the arguments of a very sensible physician, nor by the admonitions of my excellent friend Nebridius, to reject these follies.

While I was teaching rhetoric in this manner in my native town, I enjoyed the friendship of a young man of my own age, a school-fellow and companion from infancy. Indeed there is no true friendship, except thou cement it among those who cleave to thee, through the love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us. But it was a friendship too sweet, inflamed by the fervour of similar studies. For I had drawn him aside from the true faith, which he held not in a deep and genuine manner, into the Manichean follies, on account of which my mother bewailed me. And lo! thou who pursuest thy fugitives, O God of vengeance and source of mercies, and convertest us to thyself by wonderful methods, lo! thou removedst him from this life, when I had scarcely enjoyed his friendship a year after my return to Tagasta. While he lay a long time senseless in a fever, and his life was

despaired of, he was baptized without his own knowledge ; a thing which I regarded with great indifference, as not doubting but he would retain my instructions which had been instilled into his mind, rather than that which had been applied to his body, when he was ignorant of the matter. However, against all expectation he recovered. As soon as I had an opportunity of conversing with him, I attempted to turn into ridicule his late baptism, in which I expected his concurrence. But he dreaded me as an enemy, and with wonderful freedom suddenly admonished me, that if I would be his friend, I should drop the subject. Confounded at this unexpected behaviour, I deferred the conversation, till he should be thoroughly recovered. But he was removed from my madness, that he might be saved with thee my God, and that I might have comfort afterwards in reflecting on his salvation. In a few days the fever returned, and he died. How miserable was my life ! My country was a punishment, my father's house a wonderful infelicity, and whatever I had enjoyed in common with him, without him was torment itself. I found I could now no longer say, He will come shortly, as I was wont to do. If I said, Hope in God, my soul refused ; for the man whom I had lost was an object preferable to the phantasm *, on which I was bid to fix my hopes. Weeping alone was sweet to me, and supplied the absence of my friend.

Wretched I now was, and wretched is every soul that is bound by the friendship of mortal things. Behold my heart, my God, my hope, who cleansest me from the contagion of such affections, and directest my eyes to thee, and pluckest my feet out of the net. O madness ! not knowing how to love men as men.—O foolish man ! bearing with no moderation the lot of humanity. The load of misery burdened me,

* He means the fantastic idea of God, which as a Manichee he had embraced.

which I knew thou alone couldst cure ; but I was unwilling and impotent, because when I thought of thee, I had only a shadowy idol before me. If I attempted to throw my burden on thee, it returned upon myself, as I found nothing that would support it. I fled however from my country, and came to Carthage.

Time, other objects, and other friendships, gradually lessened my sorrow. But happy is he who loves thee, and his friend in thee, and his enemy for thy sake. For he only loses no friend to whom all are dear in him who is never lost ; and who is he but our God, who made and fills heaven and earth. None loses thee but he who lets thee go ; and he who dismisses thee, whither does he fly, but from the PROPITIOUS to the ADVERSE ? God of power ! turn us, and show thy face, and we shall be saved. For, wherever the soul of man turns itself, it fixes upon sorrow, except in thee. Be not vain, my soul, and make not the ear of thy heart deaf with the tumult of vanity. The word itself calls to thee to return ; there is the place of rest not to be disturbed. There with God fix thy mansion ; there intrust whatever thou hast, my soul, when fatigued with vanities. If souls please thee, love them in God, and carry them with thee to him as many as thou canst, and say to them, let us love him, he made these things, and he is not far off. The good ye love is from him, but it will deservedly be bitter, if ye love it to excess, deserting him. Ye seek a happy life : he who is our life descended hither and destroyed death. After his descent, will ye not ascend and live ? But why ascend, since ye are too high already ? Come down, that ye may ascend to God. For by rising up against him ye have fallen. Tell your friends these things, that they may weep ; and so take them with thee to God, if indeed thou sayest these things from his Spirit, and if indeed the fire of his love burn in thee.

I made approaches to thee, O Lord, and thou repelledst me, because thou resistest the proud; and what was prouder, than to assert that I was naturally what thou art*? Alas! of what avail was it that I understood the logic of Aristotle, and what are called the liberal arts! I had, it is true, a facility of comprehension, and an acuteness in argumentation, thy gift; but I sacrificed not thence to thee. Hence they were to me a curse, and not a blessing. Yet, all this time, I looked on thee as an immense lucid body, of which I myself was a fragment. How much better was it with thy children of more tardy genius, who did not recede from thy nest, but were fledged and grew up in safety in thy Church, and nourished the wings of love with the food of sound faith! O Lord our God, let us trust in the shadow of thy wings. "Do thou carry us to hoary hairs†." When thou art our strength, we have strength; our own is weakness.

B O O K V.

RECEIVE the sacrifice of my confessions, and heal all my bones, that they may say, Lord, who is like unto thee? The heart that is shut against thee excludes not thine eye, nor does the hardness of men's hearts repel thine hand, but thou softenest them when thou pleasest, in compassion or in vengeance, and none can hide himself from thy flame. But may my soul praise thee, that it may love thee, and may it acknowledge thy compassions, that it may praise thee! Let men be converted and seek thee; and behold, thou art in the heart of those who confess to thee, and cast themselves upon thee, and in thy bosom deplore their evil ways; and thou in mercy wilt wipe away their tears, that they may weep the more, and

* In this blasphemy the Manichees followed the Pagan philosophers. They had no idea, also, that God was a spirit. Hence our Author's long conflict, before he could form a spiritual idea of God.

† Isaiah xlv. 4.

rejoice in tears, because thou, Lord, refreshest and comfortest them.

In the sight of my God I will give an account of the twenty-ninth year of my age. A Manichee bishop, named Faustus, had now come to Carthage, a great snare of the devil, and many were enchanted by his eloquence, which though I could not but commend, I yet distinguished from truth. Report had represented him as a very liberal and accomplished scholar. And as I had read many things of the philosophers, I compared them with the tedious fables of the Manichees, and found the former more probable. Thou regardest, Lord, the humble; the proud thou beholdest afar off. No doubt the foretelling of eclipses, and other things that might be mentioned, demonstrate the truth of the philosophical sciences in secular things. Unhappy is that man who knows all these things and knows not Thee; but blessed is he who knows thee, though he knows not these things. But he who knows both thee and them, is not happier on their account, but on account of thee alone is happy, if knowing thee he glorify thee as God, and be thankful, and be not vain in his imaginations. For, as he is in a better situation, who possesseth a tree, and is thankful to thee for the use of it, though he knows neither its height nor breadth, than he who measures it, and counts all its branches, and neither possesses it, nor knows nor has learned his Creator; so the believer, whose property all the riches of the world are, AND WHO HAVING NOTHING, YET POSSESSETH ALL THINGS by cleaving to thee whom all things serve, is indisputably better than the most knowing natural philosopher upon earth, who lives in the neglect of thee*.

* An excellent comparison between the state of an illiterate believer, who feeds on Christ by faith, and that of an accomplished man of science, even of one skilled in speculative theology among other branches of knowledge, but destitute of spiritual life.

Yet the rashness of the Manichee writer, who undertook to write of Astronomy, though completely ignorant of the science, is inexcusable, especially as he contended that the Holy Ghost resided personally in him. The ignorance of a believer in such subjects is very excusable; even if he fancy his mistaken notions in natural philosophy to be branches of religion. But who can bear to hear a pretender to infallible inspiration vending absurdities on the works of nature? Here then I had my doubts concerning the divinity of Manicheism, and in vain proposed them to those of the sect whom I met with. "You must wait till the all-accomplished Faustus come to Carthage," was all the answer I received. On his arrival I found him an agreeable speaker, and one who could deliver their dotages in a more persuasive tone. But by this time I was surfeited with these subjects, and I had been taught by thee, my God, who hast instructed me marvellously, but secretly, that style and manner, however excellent, were not the same thing as sound argument. The address, indeed, the pathos, the propriety of language, and facility of expression in clothing his sentiments, delighted me; but my mind was unsatisfied. The proofs of ignorance in science which I saw in Manicheism, connected with pretensions to infallibility, staggered my mind with respect to their whole system. On freely conversing with him, I found him possessed of an ingenuous frankness, more valuable than all the subjects of my investigation. He owned his ignorance in all philosophy, and left me convinced of it. Grammar alone, and some Ciceronean and other classical furniture, made up his stock of knowledge, and supplied him with a copiousness of diction, which received additional ornament from his natural vivacity of imagination. My hope of discovering truth was now at an end: I remained still a Manichee, because I despaired of succeeding better on any other plan. Thus that same Faustus, who

had been the snare of death to many, was the first who relaxed my fetters, though contrary to his own intention. Thy hands, my God, in the secret of thy providence, forsook not my soul: day and night the prayers of my mother came up before thee, and thou wroughtest upon me in ways marvellous indeed, but secret. Thou didst it, my God: FOR MAN'S GOINGS ARE FROM THE LORD: and who affords salvation but thy hand, which restores what thou hast made? It was from thy influence that I was persuaded to go to Rome to teach, instead of Carthage. The deep recesses of thy wisdom and mercy must be confessed by me in this dispensation. I understood, that at Rome a teacher was not exposed to those turbulent proceedings, which were so common at Carthage. Thus the madness of one set of men, and the friendship of others, promising me vain things, were thy means of introducing me into the way of life and peace, and in secret thou madest use of their perverseness and my own. Here I detested real misery, there sought false felicity. But the true cause of this removal was at that time hidden both from me and my mother, who bewailed me going away, and followed me to the sea-side; but I deceived her, though she held me close with a view either to call me back, or to go along with me. I pretended that I only meant to keep company with a friend till he set sail; and with difficulty persuaded her to remain that night in a place dedicated to the memory of Cyprian. But that night I departed privily; and she continued weeping and praying. Thus did I deceive my mother, and such a mother! Yet was I preserved from the dangers of the sea, foul as I was in all the mire of sin, and a time was coming, when thou wouldest wipe away my mother's tears, with which she watered the earth, and even forgive this my base undutifulness. And what did she beg of thee, my God, at that time, but that I might be hindered from sailing? THOU, in profound

wisdom regarding the HINGE of her desire, neglected the particular object of her present prayers, that thou mightest gratify the general object of her devotions. The wind favoured us, and carried us out of sight of the shore when in the morning she was distracted with grief, and filled thine ears with groans and complaints ; whilst thou, in contempt of her violent agonies, hurriedst me along by my lusts to complete their desires, and punishedst her carnal desire with the just scourge of immoderate griefs *. She loved my presence with her, as is natural to mothers, though in her the affection was uncommonly strong, and she knew not what joy thou wast preparing for her from my absence. She knew not ; therefore she wept and wailed. Yet after she had wearied herself in accusing my perfidy and cruelty, she returned to her former employment of praying for me, and went home, while I went to Rome.

And there I was punished with the scourge of bodily sickness, and I drew nigh to hell, carrying the load of all my sins, original and actual. For Christ had not freed me from them by the body of his flesh through death. For how could a fantastic death, such as I, a Manichee, then believed his to be, deliver my soul ? Whither must I have gone, had I at that time departed hence, but to the fire and torments worthy of my deeds, according to the truth of thy appointment † ! She was ignorant of this, and yet prayed for me, being absent. But thou, every where present, heardest her, and pitiedst

* It requires a mind well seasoned with Christian discernment and humility, to admire in all this the Providence of God working good out of evil ; to separate what is truly holy and humble in the affections of our author's mother, from what was really carnal and earthly ; and hence to discover the justness of his reflections.

† Does the reader think this harsh ? Let him consider whether it can be any thing else than the want of a firm belief of the word of God, and a contempt of his holiness and authority, that can make him think so, and he will do well to apply the awful case to his own conscience.

me. Still in the crisis of my danger, I desired not thy baptism as I had done when a boy: I had grown up to my own disgrace, and madly derided thy medicine of human misery. How my mother, whose affection both natural and spiritual toward me was inexpressible, would have borne such a stroke, I cannot conceive. Morning and evening she frequented the church, to hear thy word and to pray, and the salvation of her son was the constant burden of her supplications. Thou heardest her, O Lord, and performedst in due season, what thou hadst predestinated. Thou recoveredst me from the fever, that at length I might obtain also a recovery of still greater importance.

The Manichees are divided into two bodies, auditors, and elect. He, in whose house I lodged, was of the former sort. I myself was ranked among the latter. With them I fancied myself perfectly sinless, and laid the blame of the evils I committed on another nature, that sinned within me*, and my pride was highly gratified with the conception. My attachment to this sect, however, grew more lax, as I found the impossibility of discovering truth, and felt a secret predilection in favour of the academic philosophy, which commends a state of doubt and uncertainty†. My landlord, who had not so much experience of the sect as I had, was elevated with their fancies. I checked his sanguine views; and though the intimacy I had contracted with this

* Every human soul was supposed by the Manichees to have in it a mixture of the good and the evil principle.

† A very natural and common effect of reasoning pride. When a man attempts to discover and adjust religious truth by leaning to his own understanding, he frequently finds scepticism the sole result of his most painful investigations; and every thing appears doubtful to him, except the incompetency of fallen man to understand these things, and the propriety of seeking a new nature and a spiritual understanding from above. If the errors of Manicheism appear very absurd, there are other modes of deviation from Scripture truth, which would appear no less so, were they as unfashionable in our times.

people (for a number of them live at Rome) made me backward to seek elsewhere for truth, I was, however, little solicitous to defend the reputation of their tenets. It was a deplorable evil with me, that my prejudice was so strong against the Christian faith. When I thought of thee, my God, I could not conceive any thing but what was corporeal, though of the most exquisite subtilty: but what was immaterial, appeared to be nothing. And here I seemed incurable in error. I did not conceive it possible, that a good Being should create an evil one, and therefore chose to admit limits to the infinite Author of Nature, by supposing him to be controlled by an independent evil principle. Yet, though my ideas were material, I could not bear to think of God being flesh. That was too gross and low in my apprehensions. Thy only begotten Son appeared to me as the most lucid part of thee, afforded for our salvation. I concluded, that such a nature could not be born of the Virgin Mary without partaking of human flesh, which I thought must pollute it. Hence arose my fantastic ideas of Jesus*, so destructive of all piety. Thy spiritual children may smile at me with charitable sympathy, if they read these my confessions; such, however, were my views. Indeed, while I was at Carthage the discourse of one Helpidius had moved me in some degree, who produced from the New Testament several powerful arguments against their positions; and their answer appeared to me to be weak, which yet they did not deliver openly, but in secret. They pretended that the Scriptures of the New Testament had been falsified by some, who desired to insert Judaism into Christianity, but they themselves produced no uncorrupted copies†. Still did I pant

* It is evident that this sect comprehended in it the fundamental errors of the Docites, of whom we have spoken repeatedly.

† The Manichees, like all other heretics, could not stand before the Scriptures. They professedly rejected the Old Tes-

under those masses of materialism, and was prevented from breathing the simple and pure air of thy truth.

Some unexpected disadvantages in the way of my profession laid me open to any probable offer of employ in other parts of Italy. From Milan, a requisition was made to Symmachus, prefect of Rome, to send a professor of rhetoric to that city. By the interest of my Manichean friends I obtained the honour, and came to Milan. There I waited on Ambrose the Bishop, a man renowned for piety through the world, and who then ministered the bread of life to thy people with much zeal and eloquence. The man of God received me like a father, and I conceived an affection for him, not as a teacher of truth, which I had no idea of discovering in thy Church, but as a man kind to me; and I studiously attended his lectures, only with a curious desire of discovering whether fame had done justice to his eloquence or not. I stood indifferent and fastidious with respect to his matter, and at the same time was delighted with the sweetness of his language, more learned indeed, but less soothing and agreeable than that of Faustus. In their thoughts there was no comparison; the latter erred in Manichean fallacies, the former taught salvation in the most salutary manner. But salvation is far from sinners, such as I then was, and yet I was gradually approaching to it and knew it not. As I now despaired of finding the way to God, I had no concern with sentiment; language alone I chose to regard. But the ideas which I neglected came into my mind,

tament, as belonging to the malignant principle; and when they were pressed with the authority of the New, as corroborating the Old, they pretended the New was adulterated. Is there any new thing under the sun? Did not Lord Bolingbroke set up the authority of St. John against St. Paul? Have we not heard of some parts of the Gospels as not genuine, because they suit not Socinian views? Genuine Christian principles alone will bear the test, nor fear the scrutiny of the whole word of God.

together with the words with which I was pleased. I gradually was brought to attend to the doctrine of the bishop. I found reason to rebuke myself for the hasty conclusions I had formed of the perfectly indefensible nature of the law and the prophets. A number of difficulties, started upon them by the Manichees, found in the expositions of Ambrose a satisfactory solution. The possibility of finding truth in the Church of Christ appeared; and I began to consider by what arguments I might convict Manicheism of falsehood. Could I have formed an idea of a spiritual substance, their whole fabric had been overturned, but I could not. Moreover, I found that the philosophers in general explained the system of nature better than the Manichees. It seemed shameful to continue in connexion with a sect replete with such evident absurdities, that I could not but prefer to them the Pagan philosophers, though I dared not trust these with the healing of my soul, because they were without the saving name of Christ. In conclusion, I determined to remain a catechumen in the church recommended to me by my parents, till I saw my way more clearly.

BOOK VI.

O THOU ! my hope from my youth, where wast thou ? Thou madest me wiser than the fowls of heaven ; yet I walked through darkness and slippery places. My mother was now come to me, courageous through piety, following me by land and sea, and secure of thy favour in all dangers. She found me very hopeless with respect to the discovery of truth. However, when I told her my present situation, she answered, that she believed in Christ, that before she left this world she should see me a sound believer. To thee her prayers and tears were still more copious, that thou wouldest perfect what thou hadst begun, and with much zeal and affection

she attended the ministry of Ambrose. Him she loved as an angel of God, because she understood that I had broken off from Manichean connexions through his means, and she confidently expected me to pass from sickness to health, though with a critical danger in the interval.

She had been used to bring bread and wine for the commemoration of the saints; and still retaining the African custom, she was prohibited by the door-keeper, understanding that the bishop had forbidden the practice. Another person would not soon have been obeyed, but Ambrose was her favourite, and was himself amazed at the promptitude of her obedience. The reasons of the prohibition were, the fear of excess, and the danger of superstition, the practice itself being very similar to those of the Pagans*. Instead therefore of a canister full of the fruits of the earth, she henceforward, on the commemoration-days of the martyrs, gave alms, according to her ability, to the poor, and received the Lord's Supper, if it was celebrated on those occasions. Ambrose himself was charmed with the fervour of her piety and the amiableness of her good works, and often brake out in his preaching, when he saw me, congratulating me that I had such a mother, little knowing what sort of a son she had, who doubted of all these things, and even apprehended that the way of life could not be found. Nor did I groan to thee in prayer for help, being intent only on study, and restless in discussions and investigations. In a secular view, Ambrose himself appeared to be a happy man, revered as he was by the imperial court; only his celibacy appeared to me in a melancholy light. But what hope he bore within, what struggles he had against the temptations of grandeur, what was his real comfort in adversity,

* Here is a striking instance of the growth of Pagan superstition in the church. The torrent was strong, and notwithstanding occasional checks which it received, at length overspread all Christendom, and quite obscured the light of the Gospel.

his hidden strength and joy derived from the bread of Life, of these things I could form no idea ; for I had no experience of them ; nor did he know the fluctuations of my soul, nor the dangerous pit in which I was enslaved. It was out of my power to consult him as I could wish, surrounded as he was with crowds of persons, whose necessities he relieved. During the little time in which he was from them, (and the time was but little) he either refreshed his body with food, or his mind with reading. Hence I had no opportunity to unbosom myself to him. A few words of conversation sufficed not. I expected in vain to find him at leisure for a long conversation*. I profited, however, by his sermons. Every Lord's day I heard him instructing the people, and I was more and more convinced of the falsity of the calumnies which those deceivers had invented against the divine books. And when I found, that the Mosaic expression of man made after the image of God, was understood by no believer to imply that God was in human form, though I still could form no idea of a spiritual substance, I was glad, and blushed to think how many years I had falsely accused the Church, instead of learning by careful inquiry†.

The state of my mind was now something altered ; ashamed of past miscarriages and delusions, and hence the more anxious to be guided right for the time to come. I was completely convinced of the falsehood of the many things I had once uttered with so much confidence. I was pleased to find, that the Church of Christ was plainly free from the

* Doubtless, could the modesty of Augustine have prevailed on him to desire such a conference, he might have obtained it. And what a bishop then was, may be seen in Ambrose.

† A remarkable instance of partiality, attended with a remarkable frankness of confession. Augustine for nine years believed that the general church held the corporeal form of the Supreme Being, though he might with ease have learned the contrary at any time. But heresy in all ages acts in the same disingenuous spirit.

monstrous absurdity of which I had accused her. I found, too, that thy holy men of old held not those sentiments with which they were charged. And I was pleased to find Ambrose very diligently commending a rule to his people, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life*;" when the bishop, removing the mystic veil, opened to us those things, which according to the letter might seem to teach perverseness: what he said was agreeable to me, though I was far from being convinced of its truth†. My former mistakes and blameable rashness rendered me now exceedingly sceptical, and I wanted the fullest intuitive evidence. By faith, indeed, I might have been healed; but having experienced a bad physician, I now dreaded a good one. By believing alone could I be cured; yet for fear of believing false things, I refused to be healed, resisting thy hands, who hast made for us the medicines of faith, and hast sprinkled them over the diseases of the world, and hast attributed so great authority to them.

I could not, however, but prefer the general doctrine of the church, and think it was more reasonable to enjoin faith in subjects incapable of demonstration, than to require the belief of most absurd fables after pretending to promise us knowledge. By degrees, thou, Lord, with a mild and merciful hand regulating and composing my heart, enabledst me to consider how many things I believed which I had never seen, what credit I gave to friends, to physicians, to many others, without which the com-

* An important observation surely! abused much by Origen, and many of his followers, to fanciful and capricious purposes. In Augustine, however, the distinction between letter and spirit was generally made commensurate with that between flesh and spirit, and in effect distinguished self-righteous from evangelical religion.

† It would be well, if many, who stumble at the Old Testament, were more convinced of their own ignorance and incompetency, for want of a just and solid acquaintance with its typical nature, and the laws of interpreting it.

mon affairs of life could never be transacted ; also, how firmly I believed who were my parents, though I could not possibly have any demonstration concerning the matter. Thus thou persuadest me, that those who believed thy books were not to be condemned for credulity, but those who disbelieved them were to be condemned for unreasonable obstinacy, especially as their credibility was established by the great authority which they had obtained throughout the world. “How do you know that those books were divinely inspired?” appeared to me now a question implying a doubt not worthy to be attended to. For, amidst all the contentiousness of philosophers, which had so much agitated my mind, I had ever preserved the belief of thy existence and Divine providence. Sometimes, indeed, this belief was stronger, sometimes weaker, yet it never left me, notwithstanding my great perplexity concerning thy nature, or the way of approaching thee. As we are too infirm to discover truth by abstract reasoning, and therefore need the authority of divine revelation, I apprehended, that thou wouldest never have given such high authority and influence to the Scriptures through the world, unless this had been the appointed means of our knowing thee, and seeking thy will ; and now the absurdities, which the literal interpretation of many things seem to involve, after I had heard a probable exposition of several of them, I referred to the depth of mysteries ; and hence the authority of thy book appeared more venerable and more credible, as it lay open to every one’s view, and yet reserved the dignity of the secret by the most profound sentiments ; offering themselves to all in a language the most open and the most humble, and exercising the attention of serious minds. I considered these things, and thou wast present with me ; I sighed, and thou heardest me ; I fluctuated, and thou directedst my course ; I went along the

broad way of the world, and thou didst not desert me *.

My heart was thirsting after honours, profits, and marriage, and thou deridedst me. In these lusts I suffered the bitterest difficulties; thou being so much the more propitious, the less thou sufferedst any thing to be pleasant to me which was not thyself. See, Lord, my heart. Now let it stick close to thee, which thou hast freed from the tenacious glue of death. How miserable was I, and how didst thou cause me to feel my misery on that day, when I was preparing to recite a panegyric to the emperor, in which there were many falsehoods, and I expected applause, even from those who knew them to be falsehoods, when my heart brooded over its anxieties, and passing through a certain street of Milan, I saw a poor beggar, I suppose at that time with a full belly, jocund and merry! I sighed, and spake to my friends who were with me, of the many pains of our madness, because from all the toils, which with so much labour and vexation we underwent, we expected only that same rest and security, which that beggar had already attained, though we were uncertain whether we should ever reach it. In truth, he was not possessed of true joy, but I, by the ambiguous windings of art, sought it in a more delusory way. He, however, was evidently merry,

* We have seen here the close thoughts of an original thinker, who had once as strong a prejudice as any against Scripture-truth; owning his rashness in condemning what he had not understood; convinced of the rationality of the Scriptures, after he had in some measure discovered the true key to their meaning; persuaded of their divinity, from their providential propagation in the world; owning the unreasonableness of expecting demonstration, and of refusing assent to grounds of faith such as determine us in common life; spying a divine beauty in the plainness and simplicity of their language, adapted to all capacities: and comprehending at length the necessity of a serious mind, in order to render them effectual to saving purposes.—Sceptics and infidels would do well to follow him in this train of thought: they need not to be ashamed to imitate a person so acute and ingenuous.

I full of anxiety ; he at his ease, I full of fear. Were I asked, whether frame of mind I should prefer, I should without hesitation choose his. Yet if I were asked, whether I would be Augustine, or the beggar, I should say the former. How perverse was this ! Much to this purpose did I say to my friends, and often observed how things were with me ; and I found myself miserable, and I grieved, and doubled that misery. And if any thing prosperous smiled upon me, I was backward to lay hold of it, because it flew away almost before I could lay hold of it*.

My most intimate conversations on these subjects were with Alypius and Nebridius. The former, my townsman, had studied under me both at Tagasta and at Carthage, and we were very dear to each other. The torrent of fashion at the latter place hurried him into the Circensian games, of which he became extravagantly fond. I was vexed to see him give into a taste so destructive of all sobriety and prudence in youth, and cannot but take notice of the providential manner in which he was delivered. While I was one day expounding in my school at Carthage, an allusion to the Circensian games occurred as proper to illustrate my subject, on which occasion I severely censured those who were fond of that madness. I meant nothing for Alypius ; but thou, Lord, who hadst designed him for a minister of thy word, and who wouldest make it manifest, that his correction should be thy own work, infixest a deep sting of conviction into his heart ; he believed, that I spake it on his account, loved me the more for it, and shook off the Circensian follies. But he was afterwards involved in Manicheism with me, deceived by the appearance

* A lively picture of human vanity, perfectly agreeable to the whole tenour of ECCLESIASTES, and evidencing the distress of those in high life to be at least equal to that of their inferiors. Ambition receives no cure from the review, till the man knows what is better.

of good. Afterwards he came to Rome, to learn the law, and there was ensnared with a new evil, a fondness for the barbarous sports of gladiators, to which he had had a strong aversion. Some friends of his carried him to them by force, while he declared with great confidence, that his mind and eyes should still be alienated from those spectacles. For a while he closed his eyes with great resolution, till, on a certain occasion, when the whole house rang with shouting, overcome by curiosity, he opened his eyes to see what was the matter. Beholding a gladiator wounded, on the sight of the blood he was inebriated with the sanguinary pleasure. He gazed, he shouted, he was inflamed, he carried away with him the madness, which stimulated him to repeat his visits; he became enamoured of the sports, even more than those who had dragged him thither against his will, and seduced others. Thence thou with a strong and merciful hand recoveredst him at length, but long after, and taughtest him to put his confidence not in himself, but in thee*. On another occasion, Alypius was apprehended as a thief, and circumstances seemed to tell so much against him, that it was by a particular providence his innocence was cleared. But he was to be a dispenser of thy word, an examiner of many causes in thy Church, and he learned caution and wisdom from this event. Him I found at Rome, and he removed with me to Milan, and practised in the law with uncommon uprightness and integrity. With me, he was uncertain with respect to his plan of religion and the way of happiness.

My friend Nebridius also left a good paternal

* It is obvious to observe hence the folly of self-confidence, and the bewitching power of temptation over so weak and corrupt a creature as man. Many who would deem it impossible that they should enter with spirit into the obscenity of the stage, or the cruelties of the slave trade, by a little indulgence, may soon become what beforehand they would abhor.

estate in the neighbourhood of Carthage, for the sake of enjoying my company ; and we three were panting after happiness, till thou shouldest give us meat in due season ; and amidst all the bitterness which attended our worldly concerns, while we were wishing to see the end of these things, we found ourselves in darkness, and we said with sighs, How long ? Yet we still followed objects with which we were dissatisfied, because we knew nothing better to substitute in their room.

As to myself in particular, I reviewed attentively how long I had been in pursuit of the true wisdom, with a determination to give up secular pursuits in case of success. I had begun at nineteen, and I was now in my thirtieth year, still miserable, anxious, procrastinating, fed with tantalizing hopes, solicited in my conscience to set apart a portion of time each day for the care of my soul. “ Your mornings are for your pupils : why do not you employ to serious purpose the afternoons ? But then what time shall I have to attend the levees of the Great, and to unbend my mind with necessary relaxation ? What, then, if death should suddenly seize you, and judgment overtake you unprepared ? Yet, on the other side, what if death itself be the extinction of my being ! But far be from my soul the idea. God would never have given such high proofs of credibility to Christianity, nor have shown himself so marvellously among men, if the life of the soul be consumed with the death of the body. Why, then, do I not give myself wholly to seek God ? But do not be in too great a hurry : you have friends of consequence, by whom you may rise in the world ! ”

In such an agitation of mind as this did I live, seeking happiness, and yet flying from it. To be divorced from the enjoyments of the world I could not bear, particularly from female society ; and as I had no idea of acquiring continency but by my own strength, I was a stranger to the way of prayer

and divine supply of grace. Thou, Lord, wilt give, if we solicit thine ears with internal groaning, and in solid faith cast our care on thee. My mother was solicitous and importunate for my being married, that I might in that state receive baptism. I promised marriage to a person who was then too young; and as she was agreeable to me, I consented to wait almost two years. During this interval, a number of us, about ten in all, formed a scheme of living in common in a society separate from the world, in which a townsman of mine, Romanianus, a man of considerable opulence, was particularly earnest. But some of us being married men, and others desirous of becoming so, the scheme came to nothing. Thou deridedst our plans, and preparedst thy own, meaning to give us food in due season, and to open thine hand, and fill our souls with blessedness. In the mean time my sins were multiplied, and the woman with whom I had cohabited, returning into Africa under a vow of never more being acquainted with our sex, and leaving with me a natural son which I had by her, I, impatient of the delay, took another woman in her room. Praise and glory be to thee, O Fountain of mercies! I became more miserable, and thou approachedst nearer. Thou wast going to snatch me out of the mire of pollution, and I knew it not. The fear of death and future judgment was the check which restrained me. This had never left me amidst the variety of opinions with which I was agitated, and I owned to Alypius and Nebrius, that the Epicurean doctrine would have had the preference in my judgment, could I have fallen in with Epicurus's idea of the annihilation of man at death; and I inquired why we might not be happy, if we were immortal, and were to live in a perpetual state of voluptuousness without any fear of losing it; ignorant as I was of the misery of being so drenched in carnality, as not to see the excellency

of embracing goodness itself for its own sake. I did not consider, that I conferred on these base topics with friends whom I loved, and was incapable of tasting pleasure, even according to the carnal ideas I then had of pleasure, without friends*.

O my serpentine ways ! Wo to the soul which presumed, if it departed from thee, that it should find any thing better. I turned on every side, and all things were hard, and thou alone wast my rest ; and lo ! thou comest and freest us from our miserable delusions, and placest us in thy way, and comfortest us, and sayest, “ Run and I will bear you ; I will carry you through, and bear you still.”

BOOK VII.

AND now the older I grew, the more defiled was I with vanity, still destitute of the spiritual idea of God ; not conceiving however of thee, O Lord, as existing in human form, an error of which, I now saw, I had unjustly accused the catholic church, but still viewing thee as an object of sense, however refined ; and when I removed the ideas of space and quantity, thou seemedst to be nothing at all. For thou hadst not yet illuminated my darkness. The arguments of my friend Nebridius appeared to me conclusive against the Manichean idea of an independent evil principle in nature. I was grown firm in the belief, that in the Lord is nothing corruptible, mutable, or in any sense imperfect ; that evil must not be imputed to him, in order that we may clear ourselves of blame, with the Manichees. Still, however, a question distressed me, how came evil into being at all ? Admitting that it lies in the will of man, that the distinction between a natural and

* A strong intimation that happiness consists in love or friendship. Whence the pleasure of friendship with Jesus, an Almighty, all-sufficient friend, made man for us, and sympathizing with us, appears to give us the just and adequate idea of bliss.

moral inability is real and just, and that the former is not the proper subject of blame as the latter is ; still I inquired, who ingrafted into my stem this cyon of bitterness, seeing that I was created by Him who is infinite sweetness ! I inquired whence came evil, and I saw not the evil which was in my investigations. I stated the great difficulty in various lights, and it still appeared as inexplicable as ever. The faith, however, of Christ our Lord and Saviour remained firm with me, rude and unformed indeed ; yet my mind forsook it not, and was imbibing it daily more and more*.

From the vain science of astrology also, which I had cultivated with obstinacy, I was delivered, partly by the reasonings of my excellent friend Nebridius, and partly by a story which I heard of a master and slave born at the same point of time, whose different fortunes in life appeared to be a sufficient confutation of all predictions by the stars† ; and the case of Esau and Jacob in holy writ illustrated the same thing. But it was thou, and thou only, who recalledst me from the death of all error, O thou life that knowest not death, and thou wisdom who illuminatest indigent minds. Thou breakest this bond for me ; still was I seeking whence comes evil. Yet, by all the fluctuations of thought thou didst not

* I have endeavoured to compress the author's accounts of his difficulties in these two questions of the substance of God, and of the origin of evil, into a small compass, not thinking it needful to translate them at large. Manicheism was the cause of his trouble in regard to the former. The latter is in all ages a natural temptation to our proud minds, and we are slow to learn to answer it with St. Paul : Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ? Rom. ix. Humility will end the subject there ; and pride is not to be satisfied by any investigations.

† Few men have candour enough to put themselves in the places and scenes of others. Nothing is more certain than this, that Augustine and Melancthon were men of extraordinary understanding ; both however were addicted to astrology, an absurdity, which even the weakest in our age escapes. Such is the difference of the times !

suffer me to be seduced from the faith of thy existence, of thy perfections, of thy providence, or to doubt that in Christ thy Son and in the Scriptures thou hast laid down the way of salvation. What were the groanings, the labours of my heart ! While I silently inquired, distressed and confounded, thou knewest the whole, thou knewest what I suffered, and no man whatever, not my most intimate friends, could know, by any description which I could give, the bitterness of my soul. My folly was, to look for a local, external happiness. No such was found to receive me. By the original dignity of my nature, I was above all sensual objects ; and thou, my true joy, madest me subject to thyself, and subjectedst to me the works of thy hands. This was the middle region of health, in which I might serve thee and rule the body. But I proudly rose up against thee, and was justly punished, by being enslaved to those things which should have been my subjects ; they gave me no respite nor rest. My pride separated me from thee, and closed my eyes with its own tumid importance. But thou, Lord, remainest for ever, and retainest not anger for ever ; thou pitiest us, and rememberest that we are dust and ashes. It pleased thee to remove my deformities, and by internal incentives thou agitatedst me, that I might be impatient till thou madest thyself assuredly known to me by internal illumination. The morbid tumours of my mind were gradually lessening under thy secret medicinal hand, and the eyes of my understanding, darkened and confounded as they were, by the sharp eye-salve of salutary pains, were healing day by day.

And first, as thou wouldst show me how thou resistest the proud, and givest grace to the humble ; and how great thy mercy is shown to be in the way of humility ; thou procuredst for me, by means of a person highly inflated with philosophical pride, some of the books of Plato translated into Latin ; in which

I read passages concerning the Divine Word, similar to those in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel ; in which his eternal divinity was exhibited, but not his incarnation, his atonement, his humiliation, and glorification of his human nature. For thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes ; that men might come to thee weary and heavy laden, and that thou mightest refresh them ; thou, who art meek and lowly in heart, who directest the meek in judgment, and teachest the gentle thy ways, seeing our low estate, and forgiving all our sins. This is a knowledge not to be attained, while men are lifted up by the pomp and grandeur of what appears to them a sublimer doctrine. Thus did I begin to form better views of the Divine nature, even from Plato's writings, as thy people of old spoiled the Egyptians of their gold, because whatever good there is in any thing is all thy own ; and at the same time I was enabled to escape the evil which was in those books, and not to attend to the idols of Egypt.

However, I was hence admonished to retire into myself under thy guidance, and I was enabled to do it, because thou art my helper. I entered, and saw with the eye of my mind the immutable light of the Lord, perfectly distinct from sensible light, not only in degree, but in kind. Nor was it in the same manner above my mind, that oil is above water, or as heaven is above earth, but superior, because he made me, and I was inferior, because made by him *. He who knows truth, knows this light, and

* He had been long corrupted by the Atheistic views which he had learned from the Manichees, and no wonder that he now found it so difficult to conceive aright of God. There appears something divinely spiritual in the manner of his deliverance. That the Platonic books also should give the first occasion is very remarkable ; though I apprehend the Latin translation which he saw, had improved on Plato, by the mixture of something scriptural, according to the manner of the Ammonian philosophers.

he who knows it, knows eternity. Love knows it. O eternal truth, true love, and loving eternity ! Thou art my God, I pant after thee day and night. And when I first knew thee, thou tookest me that I might see that "to be" which I saw ; and that I who saw, "as yet was not." Thou impressedst repeatedly my infirm sight, thou shinedst on me vehemently, and I trembled with love and horror, and I found that I was far from thee in a region of dissimilitude, as if I heard thy voice from on high, "I am the food of those that are of full age ; grow, and thou shalt eat me." Nor shalt thou change me into thyself, but shalt thyself be changed into me. And I said, can God be nothing, since he is neither diffused through finite nor infinite space ? And thou criedst from afar, "I am that I am *," and I heard with my heart, and could not doubt. Nay I should sooner doubt my own existence, than the truth of that which is understood by the things that were made.

I now began to understand, that every creature of thine hand is in its nature good, and that universal nature is justly called on to praise the Lord for his goodness†. The evil which I sought after has no positive existence ; were it a substance, it would be good, because every thing individually, as well as all things collectively, is good. Evil appeared to be a want of agreement in some parts to others. My opinion of the two independent principles, in order to account for the origin of evil, was without foundation. Evil is not a thing to be created ; let good things only forsake their just place, office and order, and then, though all be good in their nature, evil, which is only a privative, abounds and produces positive misery. I asked what was iniquity, and I found it to be no substance, but a perversity of the will, which declines from thee the Supreme Substance

* Exodus iii.

† Psalm cxlviii.

to lower things, and casts away its internal excellencies, and swells with pride externally*.

And I wondered that I now began to have a desire after thee, and no longer took a phantasm for thee. I was not urgent to enjoy thee, my God, for though I was hurried toward thee, by thy beauty, I was presently carried downward from thee by my own weight, and I could no longer sin without groaning; the weight was carnal habit. The memory of thee was with me, and I did not doubt of the reality of that divine essence to which I should adhere, but of myself being ever brought into a state of spiritual existence. I saw thy invisible things by the things which were made, but I could not fix my attention to thee; my corruption exerting itself, I returned to my usual habits, but I could not shake off the fragrance of memory, smelling the true good, regretting the loss, and impotent to taste and enjoy †.

I now sought the way of obtaining strength to enjoy thee, and found it not, till I embraced the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, WHO IS ABOVE ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER ‡, calling and saying, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. For the Word was made flesh, that thy wisdom might suckle our infancy. But I did not yet in humility hold the humble Jesus, my Lord, nor

* Perhaps a more just account of the manner in which evil is produced can scarcely be given; it is certainly well calculated to confute the principles of Manicheism.

† In many true converts this was their state exactly, while God was turning them from darkness to light. Such a sense of God, as never before was known, is attained, sufficient to conquer the false and injurious thoughts of him, which had been before imbibed, be they what they may. But the man feels his impotence with respect to good, and he must, with Augustine, struggle and endure for a time, till the strength of Jesus is perfected in his weakness.

‡ Here is a clear testimony to the authenticity and genuine interpretation of that remarkable text, Rom. ix. 5, the light of which has been so peculiarly offensive to those whom fashionable heresies in our age have darkened.

know the mysterious power of his weakness, that he might humble, nourish, and at length exalt heavy-laden souls. Far other thoughts had I conceived of Christ. I had viewed him only as a man of unequalled wisdom. But, of the mystery of the Word made flesh, I had not formed the least suspicion. Only I concluded from the things written of him, that he must have had a human soul. Alypius indeed had conceived, that the catholic faith denied him the spirit of a man, and was a longer time prejudiced against the truth, because he confounded the Church with the Apollinarian heresy. As to myself, I was not till sometime after taught to distinguish the truth from the opinion of Photinus*; but there must be heresies, that they who are of the truth may be made manifest.

But when, by reading the Platonic books I began to conceive of the immaterial infinite Supreme, I talked of these things like a person of experience, but was perishing, because void of Christ, I desired to appear wise, was puffed up with knowledge, and wept not. Love, on the foundation of humility, which is Christ Jesus, was to me unknown. The books of Plato knew not this; still would I remark the providence of my God, in leading me to study them, before I searched the Scriptures, that I might remember how I had been affected by them; and when afterwards my wounds should be healed by thy hand through the Scriptures, I might distinguish the difference between presumption and confession, between those who see whither we ought to go, without knowing the means, and those who see the way itself leading to the actual inheritance. Had I been informed at first by thy Scriptures, and thou hadst endeared thyself to me in their familiarity, an after-acquaintance with Plato might either have shaken my faith, or raised in me an undue estimation of the worth of his writings.

* Which seems to have been the same with Sabellianism.

With eagerness, therefore, I took up the inspired volume*, and particularly the Apostle Paul; and those questions, in which he once had seemed inconsistent with himself, and the law, and the prophets, were now no more. There now appeared one uniform tenour of godliness, and I learnt to rejoice with trembling, and I took up the book, and found whatever truth I had read there, is said with this recommendation of thy grace, that he who sees should not SO GLORY AS IF HE HAD NOT RECEIVED, not only that which he sees, but the power of seeing itself†. For what hath he, which he hath not received? And he who cannot see afar, should however walk in the way, by which he may come, see, and lay hold. For though he be delighted WITH THE LAW OF GOD IN THE INWARD MAN, YET WHAT SHALL HE DO WITH THE OTHER LAW IN HIS MEMBERS WARRING AGAINST THE LAW OF HIS MIND, AND BRINGING HIM INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE LAW OF SIN, WHICH IS IN HIS MEMBERS‡? For thou, Lord, art just, but we have sinned and dealt wickedly, and thy hand is heavy upon us, and we are justly delivered up to the power of the old sinner who has the power of death, because he persuaded us to follow his will, by which he did not stand in the truth. Who shall deliver us from the body of this death, but thy grace through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom the prince of this world could find nothing worthy of death, and who by his death blotted out the hand-writing that was against us? The Platonic books had nothing of this, nor

* It may be remarked here, how depraved the taste of man is, and how much and how long he will suffer before he give himself simply to the instruction of God's own words.

† He means the inestimable privilege of spiritual understanding, through his want of which St. Paul had long appeared to him contradictory, confused, and disgusting. The man is well qualified to recommend to others the value of divine teaching, who, like Augustine, is experiencing it in himself. Nothing teaches humility like such experience.

‡ Rom. vii.

the face of piety, the tears of confession, the sacrifice of a troubled spirit, a broken and contrite heart, salvation, the spouse, the holy city, the earnest of the Holy Spirit, the cup of our redemption. In them no one hears, "Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is one thing to see a land of peace at a distance, with no practicability of attaining it, and another to pursue the right road towards it, under the care of the heavenly Commander, who made the road for our use. I was wonderfully affected with these views, while I read THE LEAST OF THINE APOSTLES, and I considered thy works and trembled.

B O O K VIII.

ALL MY BONES SHALL SAY, LORD, WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE? Thou hast broken my bones in sunder. How thou brakest them, I will relate; and all who worship thee, when they hear these things, shall bless the Lord. Though now confirmed in my doctrinal views, my heart was yet uncleansed. I approved of the Saviour, in general, who is the Way, but was offended with his narrow way, and thou inspiredst me with a desire of going to Simplician, an aged, experienced Christian, even from his youth, who seemed capable of instructing me in my present fluctuations. My desires no longer being inflamed with the hope of honour and money, I was displeased with the servitude of the world in which I lived. Thy sweetness was now more agreeable in mine eyes; but another tie still detained me, in which I had permission indeed in a legal way, though exhorted to the higher and nobler practice of celibacy*. I had heard from the mouth of Truth, that there are eunuchs, WHO HAVE MADE THEMSELVES EUNUCHS FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN'S SAKE.

* Corinthians vii.

I went then to Simplician, the spiritual father of bishop Ambrose himself, who loved him as his father. I explained to him my religious situation. When I was relating, that I had read some Platonic books translated by Victorinus, a Roman rhetorician, who had died a Christian, he congratulated me on having met with that philosopher rather than any of the rest; because they are full of fallacy, but in him intimations are given of God and of his word*. Then for my practical instruction, he gave me the narrative of the conversion of Victorinus, with whom he had been intimate at Rome. Thy grace was indeed admirable in that convert. He was a man of great learning, far advanced in life, well skilled in all liberal knowledge; he had read, criticised, and illustrated many philosophers; he had taught many illustrious senators; had been honoured by a statue erected in the Roman Forum, as a reward of his labours; and even to his old age was a worshipper of idols, and a partaker of all the rites, to which almost the whole Roman nobility at that time were addicted; moreover, he had, many years, defended the monstrous and absurd objects of worship, to which the common people had been accustomed, but now he was not ashamed to become a child of thy Christ, an infant of thy fountain, with his neck subjected to the yoke of humility, and his forehead subdued to the reproach of the cross. O Lord, thou, who bowedst the heavens and camest down, who touchedst the mountains, and they smoked, by what means didst thou insinuate thyself into his heart! He read, as Simplician told me, the holy Scripture, and studiously investigated all Christian literature, and told my instructor, not openly, but in secrecy as to a friend, "Know that I am already a Christian." He answered, "I shall not believe it,

* Here I apprehend is a proof of the decay of Christian taste in the church at that time, the consequence of Ammonianism and Origenism, namely, a disposition to find in Plato what he has not. What communion hath the temple of God with idols?

nor rank you among Christians, till I see you in the Church of Christ." But he smiling, answered, "Do walls then make Christians?" This kind of dialogue was frequently repeated between them. For Victorinus feared to offend his friends, men of rank and dignity, and he dreaded the loss of reputation. But after that, by further studying of the word, and by secret prayer, he had acquired more strength, and feared to be denied by Christ before the angels, if he denied him before men, and felt himself condemned for being ashamed of Christian sacraments, though he had not been ashamed of demon-worship, he blushed at his false modesty, and suddenly said to Simplician, "Let us go to the Church, I wish to be made a Christian." The venerable old saint, unable to contain his joy, went with him when he was imbued with the first sacraments of instruction. Not long after, he gave in his name, that he might have the benefit of Christian baptism. Rome was astonished; the church rejoiced. The proud saw and were indignant, and gnashed with their teeth and pined away; but, the Lord his God was the hope of thy servant, and he no longer regarded lying vanities. At length, when the season came on of professing his belief, which profession is usually delivered at Rome from a high place, in the sight of the faithful, in a certain form of words gotten by heart, by those who are to partake of thy grace in baptism, an offer was made by the presbyters, that he should repeat them more secretly, as was the custom for some who were likely to be disturbed through bashfulness. But he chose rather to profess his salvation in the sight of the holy multitude; for there was no salvation in rhetoric, and yet he had publicly professed it. When he mounted the pulpit to repeat,—all who knew him, (and who was there that did not know him?) with a whisper of congratulation resounded his name. Amidst the general joy, the sound though checked with decent

reverence, went round, "Victorinus, Victorinus!" They exulted at the sudden sight of him; and were as suddenly silent, that they might hear him. He pronounced the form of words with an excellent confidence, and all wished to hold him in their bosom, and they actually did so in love and joy*.

O gracious God! what is the cause, that men more rejoice in the salvation of a soul despaired of, than if it had always been in a state of security! For even thou, merciful Father! rejoicest more over one penitent, than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance, and we hear with peculiar pleasure the recovery of thy prodigal son. Now what is the reason, that the mind is more delighted with things recovered, than with things never lost? Human life is full of such instances. Is this the law of human happiness? How high art thou in the highest, and how inscrutable in the deepest! Thou never recedest from us, and with reluctance we return to thee. Awake, O Lord, and do, quicken and recall us, inflame and carry us along; burn, be sweet to our taste, and let us now love and run. The joy of Victorinus's conversion indeed was greater, because his influence and authority, it was hoped, might be useful to the salvation of many. For, far be it from thee, that in thy house there should be respect of persons, since thou RATHER HAST CHOSEN THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD TO CONFOUND THE STRONG, AND BASE THINGS OF THE WORLD, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are †. What a

* I thought a careful translation of this story was proper. It is an instance of victorious grace, something like that which we have more at large related by Augustine concerning himself. It shows how disreputable real Christianity was among the great, even in countries where it was the established religion, as was then the case at Rome; and what grace is needful to cause men to be willing to bear the cross of Christ; and it illustrates also some Christian customs and discipline at that time.

† 1 Cor. i.

treasure had the heart and tongue of Victorinus been to Satan! Well did it become thy sons to exult, because our King had bound the strong man, and they saw his goods taken from him, and cleansed, and fitted for thy honour, and to every good work.

Hearing these things from Simplician, I was inflamed with the desire of imitation. But after he had informed me further that Victorinus, on occasion of Julian's prohibitory law, had given up his professorship, I found an inclination to imitate him, bound as I was, to the same calling, not by a foreign chain, but by my own iron will. The enemy held my will, thence formed my chain, and held me fast. From a perverse will was formed lust, from the indulgence of lust was formed habit, and habit unresisted became necessity. Of such links was my chain of slavery composed; and the new will, which was beginning in me, to worship thee freely, and enjoy thee, my sole certain pleasure, was not yet strong enough to overcome the old one, hardened by custom. Thus two wills, the old and the new, the flesh and the spirit, contended within me, and between them tore my very soul*. Thus did I understand by my own experience what I had read, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh†. I indeed was actuated by both, but more by that which I approved, than by that which I disapproved. I had now no just excuse; truth was certain to me, yet I was loth to serve thee, and was as afraid to be rid of my impediments, as I ought to have been of contracting

* Excellent comment on Rom. vii.—A description only to be fully understood by experienced Christians.

† Galat. v. where the same subject is more briefly handled: the conflict is well known to true Christians all their days, though it most strikes their minds at first. In the unconverted it can have no existence, because the will is inclined only one way, and it is therefore quite a different thing from the conflict between reason and passion, with which it has been confounded.

them. My meditations on thee, were like the attempts of men desirous of awaking, but sinking again into sleep. I had not a heart to answer thee, **AWAKE THOU THAT SLEEPEST, AND ARISE FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST SHALL GIVE THEE LIGHT***. By and by—shortly—let me alone a little—these were the answers of my heart. But, by and by had no bounds, and let me alone a little, went to a great length. In vain was I delighted with thy law in the inner man, when another law in my members warred against the law of my mind. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death, but thy grace through Jesus Christ our Lord?

My anxiety increasing, I daily groaned to thee, I frequented thy church as often as I had leisure from those employments under the weight of which I groaned. Alypius was with me during his vacation from the law, which was his practice, as rhetoric was mine. Our other friend, Nebridius, was gone to assist Verecundus at Milan, in teaching grammar, who studiously avoided attendance upon the great, that he might command leisure to improve his mind. On a certain day, Politian, an African, one of our townsmen came to visit me and Alypius. We sat down to converse, and upon the play-table which was before us, he saw a book, opened it, and found it to be the Apostle Paul, to his great surprise; for he supposed it to have been a book relating to my profession. He, though a soldier at court was a devout person, and congratulated me on my taste. On my informing him, how earnestly I studied those epistles, he gave me an account of Anthony the Egyptian monk, a character to that hour unknown to us; he informed us also of a number of monasteries, of which we knew nothing. There was even a monastery at Milan under the care of Ambrose at that time, of which we

* Ephesians v.

had not heard *. When he had given a narration also of two of his companions, who suddenly gave themselves up to God in the same way, and forsook the world, I felt myself confounded. About twelve years had now elapsed from the nineteenth year of my life, when I read Cicero's Hortensius, to this time since I had begun to seek wisdom, and I was yet at a distance from joy. In the entrance on youth, I had prayed for chastity, and had said, "Give me chastity and continence, but grant not my request immediately." For I was afraid, lest thou shouldest quickly hear my prayer, and heal this distemper of concupiscence, which I wished rather to be fully gratified than extinguished. And I had gone on perversely in depraved superstition, with a heart at enmity against thy truth, and had deferred from day to day to devote myself to thee, under the pretence that I was uncertain where the truth lay. Now that it was certain, I was still a slave, and "I hear of others, who have not studied ten or twelve years as I have done, and who, notwithstanding, have given themselves up to God." Such were my thoughts. What pains did I not take to spur my reluctant spirit! My arguments were spent, a silent trepidation remained, and I dreaded deliverance itself as death. "What is this," said I to Alypius, "which you have heard? Illiterate men rise and seize heaven, while we, with all our learning, are rolling in the filth of sin." In the agitation of my spirit I retired into the garden belonging to the house, knowing how evil I was, but ignorant of the good thou hadst in store for me. Alypius followed me, and we sat remote from the house, and with vehement indignation I rebuked

* Should the serious reader find himself inclined to blame this monastic taste, I agree with him : but let the principle have its just praise ; it originated in a desire of freedom from the temptations of the world ; and let professors of godliness observe, how much the excessive indulgence of the commercial spirit prevents their own progress in our times.

my sinful spirit, because it would not give itself up to God. I found I wanted a will. Still was I restrained, and thou, in secret, wast urgent upon me with severe mercy. Vanities of vanities, my old mistresses, shook my vesture of flesh, and whispered, Are we to part? and for ever? The evil suggestions which I felt, may thy mercy avert from the soul of thy servant! Canst thou live without us? they said; but with less and less power. On the other hand appeared the chaste dignity of Continence. Canst thou not, said she, perform what many of both sexes have performed, not in themselves indeed, but in the strength of the Lord? Cast thyself on him, fear not, he will not suffer thee to fall. Turn a deaf ear to the suggestions of the flesh; they speak of pleasure, but not as the law of thy God. Such was my internal controversy. When deep meditation had collected all my misery into the view of my heart, a great storm arose, producing a large shower of tears. To give it vent, I rose up hastily from Alypius. The sound of my voice appeared pregnant with weeping, and he remained motionless in the same place. I prostrated myself under a fig-tree, and with tears bursting out, I spake to this effect: How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry? for ever? remember not my old iniquities. For I perceived myself entangled by them. How long shall I say to-morrow? why should not this hour put an end to my slavery? Thus I spake, and wept in the bitterness of my soul, and I heard a voice, as from a neighbouring house, repeating frequently, "take up and read, take up and read." I paused, and began to think, whether I ever had heard boys use such a speech in any play, and could recollect nothing like it. I then concluded that I was ordered from heaven, to take up the book, and read the first sentence I cast mine eyes upon. I returned hastily to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there I had placed the book of St. Paul's Epistles. I

seized it, opened, and read what first struck my eyes ; “ Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying ; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Nor did I choose to read any thing more, nor had I occasion. Immediately at the end of this sentence, all my doubts vanished. I closed the book, and with a tranquil countenance gave it to Alypius. He begged to see what I had read, I showed him it, and he read still further*. “ Him that is weak in the faith receive ye ;” which he applied to himself, as he told me. With a placid serenity and composure suitable to his character, in which he far excelled me, he joined with me in going to my mother, who now triumphed in the abundant answers given to her petitions. Thus didst thou turn her mourning into joy.

B O O K IX.

O LORD, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid, thou hast broken my bonds in sunder. Let my heart and tongue, and all my bones say, Lord, who is like unto thee ? and do thou answer me, and say to my soul, I am thy salvation. Who and what am I ? what evil am I not ? Was it my will, or words, or deeds, that have done it ? No : but thou, Lord, good and merciful, by thy powerful right hand delivered me from the depths of misery ; and thoroughly cleansed the very bottom of my heart of all its corruptions. The whole of my evil lay in a will stubbornly set in opposition to thine. But where lay my free-will of old time, and from what deep secret was it called out in a moment, by which I bowed my neck to thy easy yoke, and my shoulders to thy light burden, Christ Jesus, my helper and Redeemer ? How sweet was it, in a moment to be free from those delightful vanities, to lose which

* Rom. xiii. end, and xiv. beginning.

had been my dread, to part with which was now my joy! Thou ejectedst them, O my true and consummate delight, and thou enteredst in their room, O sweeter than all pleasure, but not to flesh and blood; clearer than all light, but to the inner man; higher than all honour, but not to those who are high in their own conceits. Now was my mind set free from the corroding cares of avarice and ambition and lust, and I conversed familiarly with thee, my light, my riches, my Saviour, and my God.

I determined in thy sight to give up my employments, not abruptly, but gradually*. And opportunely, the vintage vacation being at hand, I resolved to continue in my employment till that time. I was glad also, that I had an opportunity of saying to my scholars, what was true, that the care of my health, which had suffered much from fatigue, obliged me to cease from the laborious office of teaching. And to have given up the work before the vacation might have appeared arrogant, and ex-

* I would suggest four particular remarks on the narrative of our author's conversion. 1. That it does please God in every age to distinguish some of the works of his Holy Spirit by extraordinary circumstances. It is of little consequence, to debate whether the voice heard in the garden was miraculous or not, whether literally true, or an impression on his mind. Either way it was equally from God, and sheds a lustre on the conversion of a great and eminently holy personage, who was called to testify remarkably for God in his day. 2. There is generally some master-sin, which impedes the work of God in all his people; Augustine's was sensuality, and in the mortification of that master-sin the grace of God is peculiarly illustrated. 3. The great medium of deliverance always is, the written word of God testifying of Jesus, and salvation only by putting him on through faith. 4. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. In our weakness thoroughly felt God appears. Is it to be wondered, that the Saint before us proved so strong and zealous a champion of the effectual grace of God, and was made use of to revive the clear doctrine of it in the church, and was trained up by his own experience to defend it against the subtilties of Pelagius? He who foresaw what Pelagius would introduce, in his adorable wisdom, thus provided an experienced pastor of his church, who in due time should withstand his corruptions.

posed me to the censure of vanity. But should any of thy servants think, that I did wrong in remaining in the chair of deceit a day longer, I will not contend. But hast not thou, most merciful Lord, washed away this, with all my other deadly sins, in the laver of regeneration?

Our friend Verecundus was seized with a distemper, and, receiving baptism in the midst of it, departed this life in thy faith and fear. Not long after my conversion, my friend Nebridius also, though he had sunk into the error which takes away the proper manhood of thy Son, was recovered; and becoming a faithful Christian, in Africa his own country, quitted this tabernacle of clay, and now lives in Abraham's bosom. He no more puts his ear to my mouth, but his spiritual mouth to thy fountain to receive as much wisdom as he is capable of—happy without end.

It is pleasant to me to remember and confess how thou didst teach me and my friend Alypius, in the country, where we enjoyed the affectionate and sedulous care of my mother. We were both in the capacity of catechumens, and I read with pleasure the Psalms of David. With what mingled pity and indignation did I look on the Manichees, who madly rejected the antidote of life. O that they saw the internal eternal life, which because I had tasted, I grieved that I could not show it to them!

The holidays being finished, I signified to my scholars, that they must provide themselves another teacher. And I wrote to Ambrose an account of my errors, and of my present desire; and begged him to recommend some part of thy word more particularly to my attention, as a proper preparative for baptism. He pointed out to me the prophet Isaiah, I apprehend, on account of his superior perspicuity in opening the Gospel. However, finding the first part of this prophet more obscure, and apprehending the rest to be similar, I deferred the

reading of him, till I was more experienced in the Scriptures. The time approaching in which I must give in my name, I left the country and returned to Milan. There I received baptism with Alypius and the boy Adeodatus, the fruit of my sin. He was almost fifteen years old, and, in understanding, he exceeded many learned men. I glorify thee for thy gifts, my God ; for I had nothing in the boy but sin. For that I brought him up in thy religion, thou, and thou only, inspiredst me. I looked with trembling at his prodigious genius. But thou soon removedst him from the earth, and I remember him with greater satisfaction, as I have now no anxiety for his childhood, his youth, or his manhood. Nor could I at that time be satisfied with contemplating the mystery of redemption. The hymns and songs of thy church moved my soul intensely ; thy truth was distilled by them into my heart ; the flame of piety was kindled, and my tears flowed for joy. This practice of singing had been of no long standing at Milan. It began about the year when Justina persecuted Ambrose. The pious people watched in the church, prepared to die with their pastor. There my mother sustained an eminent part in watching and praying. Then hymns and psalms, after the manner of the East, were sung, with a view of preserving the people from weariness ; and thence the custom has spread through Christian churches.

Thou, who makest men to be of one mind in an house, unitedst to us one of our young townsmen, Euodius, who had served in the army, and was now regenerated. We determined to return to Africa ; and when we were at the mouth of the Tiber, my mother departed this life. I must not pass by the conceptions of my soul concerning her, who endured labour for my temporal birth, and laboured in heart for my spiritual birth. She had been brought up in a Christian family, but did not so much commend her mother's care, as that of a

decrepid old servant of the house, who had nursed her father, whose years and character were highly respected, and who superintended the education of her master's daughters. She never suffered them to drink even water, except at meals, telling them, that if ever they became mistresses, the custom of drinking would remain, but they would then indulge it in wine, not water. Yet my mother Monica, notwithstanding the care of this provident governess, when young had learned by degrees to drink wine, having been sent to draw it for the use of the family. By what method was she delivered from this snare? Thou providest for her a malignant reproach from a maid of the house, who, in a passion, called her drunkard. From that moment she gave up the practice for ever. Thus didst thou prepare a cure for her evil practice, by the malevolent railing of another, that no man may attribute it to his own power, if his admonitions of another be attended with salutary effect*.

After her marriage with my father Patricius, she endeavoured to win him over to thy service by the amiableness of her manners, and patiently bore the injuries of his unfaithfulness. She still looked for thy mercy, that learning to believe in thee, he might become chaste. His temper was passionate, but his spirit benevolent. She knew how to bear with him when angry, by a perfect silence and composure; and when she saw him cool, would meekly expostulate with him. Many matrons in her company would complain of the blows and harsh treatment they received from their husbands, whose tempers were yet milder than that of Patricius; then she would exhort them to govern their tongues, and remember the inferiority of their condition.

* I could not prevail with myself to pass over altogether this, and a few more circumstances of domestic life, which follow. Let the piety and prudence, which they breathe, compensate for their simplicity. To a serious mind they will perhaps appear, not only not contemptible, but even instructive.

And when they expressed their astonishment, that it was never heard that Patricius, a man of so violent a temper, had beaten his wife, or that they ever were at variance a single day, she informed them of her plan. Those who followed it, thanked her for the good success of it; those who did not, experienced vexation. Her mother-in-law, at first, was irritated against her by the whispers of servants. But she overcame her by mild obsequiousness, in-somuch that she at length informed her son of the slanders of those backbiters, and desired that they might be restrained. Thus she and her mother-in-law lived in perfect harmony. It was a great gift, which, O my God, thou gavest to her, that she never repeated any of the fierce things, which she heard from persons who were at variance with one another, and was conscientiously exact, in saying nothing but what might tend to heal and to reconcile.

I might have been tempted to think this a small good, had I not known by grievous experience the innumerable evils resulting to society from the contrary spirit, by which men extend mischief like a pestilence, not only repeating the words of angry enemies to angry enemies, but also adding what never had been said; whereas the human mind should not be content with negative goodness in such cases, but should endeavour to promote peace by speaking what is good, as my amiable mother did, through the effectual teaching of thy Spirit. At length, in the extremity of life, she gained her husband to thee, and he died in the faith of Christ.

It was through thy secret appointment that she and I stood alone at a window facing the East, in a house at the mouth of the Tiber, where we were preparing ourselves for our voyage. Our discourse was highly agreeable, and forgetting the past, we endeavoured to conceive aright the nature of the eternal life of the saints. It was evident to us, that

CHAP.
II.

no carnal delights deserved to be named on this subject; erecting our spirits more ardently, we ascended above the noblest parts of the material creation to the consideration of our own minds, and passing above them, we attempted to reach heaven itself, to come to thee, by whom all things were made. There our hearts were enamoured, and there we held fast the first fruits of the Spirit, and returned to the sound of our own voice, which gave us an emblem of the Divine Word. We said, if the flesh, the imagination, and every tongue should be silenced, for they proclaim, **WE MADE NOT OURSELVES, BUT HE WHO REMAINETH FOR EVER:** If these things should now hold their peace, and God alone should speak, not by any emblems or created things, but by himself, so that we could hear his Word; should this be continued, and other visions be withdrawn, and this alone seize and absorb the spectator for ever, is not this the meaning of, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord *?” At that moment the world appeared to us of no value: and she said, Son, I have now no delight in life. What I should do here, and why I am here, I know not, the hope of this life being quite spent. One thing only, your conversion, was an object for which I wished to live. My God has given me this, in larger measure. What do I here?—Scarcely five days after, she fell into a fever. A brother of mine, who was with us, lamented that she was likely to die in a foreign land. She looked at him with anxiety, to see him so grovelling in his conceptions, and then looking at me, said, Place this body any where; do not distress yourselves concerning it. I could not but rejoice, and give thee thanks, that she was delivered from that anxiety, with which I knew she always had been agitated in regard to a sepulchre, which she had provided for herself, and prepared

* Matth. xxv. In Rev. xxi. 23. the same sublime thought is described under the medium of sight, which here is conveyed under the medium of hearing.

near the body of her husband. I knew not the time when this void had been filled by the fulness of thy grace, but I rejoiced to find this evidence of it. I heard afterwards, that while we were at Ostia she had discoursed with some friends, in my absence, concerning the contempt of life, and they, expressing their surprise that she did not fear to leave her body so far from her own country; "Nothing," said she, "is far to God, and I do not fear that he should not know where to find me at the resurrection." She departed this life on the ninth day of her illness, in the fifty sixth year of her age, and the thirty-third of mine*.

BOOK X.

Now, Lord, my groaning testifies that I am displeased with myself; but thou art light and pleasure, and art loved and desired, that I may blush for myself, and renounce myself, and choose thee: and neither attempt to please thee, nor myself, but by depending on thee. For when I am wicked, then to confess to thee is no other thing than to be displeased with myself; and when godly, this is nothing else, but to confess that thou affordest that gift to me. The confessions of my past evils, which thou hast forgiven, changing my mind by faith and thy baptism, when they are read and heard, excite the heart, that it sink not in despair, but may watch in the love of thy mercy, and the sweetness of thy grace, by which the weak, brought to feel his own weakness, is made strong. But what advantage will result from my confessing, as I now propose, not what I was,

* In what follows to the end of this Book, the Author gives a very amiable picture of the filial affections, tempered by piety and resignation, which he felt on this occasion, not indeed without a mixture of the superstition of praying for the dead, which was growing in this century. In him the evangelical spirit, however, predominates extremely, even while he is indulging the superstitious. But let it suffice to have given this general account.

but what I now am? I will discover myself to such as will rejoice over me for what is good, and will pray for and sympathize with me in regard to what is evil, more secure as I am, through thy mercy, than my innocence. I am a little child, but my Father always lives, and is my sufficient guardian. What temptations I can or cannot resist, I know not. But my hope is this, that thou art faithful, that thou dost not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation also makest a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it*. Lord, I love thee; thou hast smitten my heart with thy Word, and I have loved thee. But what do I love, when I love thee? not the heavens and the earth, nor any created beauty. They cry aloud, we are not God, he made us. Where shall I find thee, but in thyself, above me? Too late did I love thee, thou PRIMÆVAL Beauty! Thou calledst aloud, and overcamest my deafness: thou shonest, and dispelledst my darkness. Thou wast fragrant, and I panted after thee. I tasted, and hungered and thirsted after thee: thou touchedst me, and I was inflamed into thy peace. When I shall stick wholly to thee, I shall no more have pain and fatigue, and my whole life shall live full of thee. But now, because thou supportest him whom thou fillest, because I am not full of thee, I am a burden to myself. My wholesome griefs and pernicious pleasures contend together, and I know not on which side the victory stands. Woe is me! Thou art my physician, I am sick. Thou art merciful, I am wretched. All my hope lies in thy immense mercy. Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt. Thou commandest us to keep from the lust of the flesh, from the lust of the eyes, and from the pride of life: and what thou commandest, thou hast given me. Yet there still live in my memory the images of evils, to which I had been habituated,

* 1 Cor. x.

and they occur to me even in sleep. Is not thy hand, O God, able to heal all the diseases of my soul, and to sanctify even the hours of rest? I would rejoice with trembling in what thou hast given me, and mourn over that which is imperfect, and hope that thou wilt perfect thy mercies, when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

There is another evil of the day, and I wish the day may be sufficient for it. We refresh the continual ruins of the body by food, till this corruptible shall put on incorruption. Thou hast taught me to use food as medicine. But while I am passing from the uneasiness of hunger to the rest of satiety; in the very passage the snare of concupiscence is laid for me; and the bounds of innocence are not easily defined, and a pretence for indulgence is made on that very account. These temptations I daily endeavour to resist, and I call on thy right hand for my salvation, and make known to thee my agitations of soul, because I am not yet clear on this subject. I hear my God, "let not your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*." The latter is far from me, let it not approach me; the former sometimes steals upon me, keep it at a distance from me. Who is there, Lord, that is perfectly temperate? Whoever he be, let him magnify thy name. But I am not he, I am a sinful man. However, I magnify thy name, and He who overcame the world, and numbers me among the weak members of his body, intercedes for my sins.

In regard to the enticement of smells, I am not solicitous. When they are absent, I want them not; when present, I do not refuse them, content to be without them entirely. So I think; but such is my miserable darkness, that I must not easily credit myself, because, what is within, generally lies hid, till experience evidence it. The only hope, the only confidence, the only firm promise, is thy mercy.

* Luke xxi.

The pleasures of the ear have deeper hold on me. I find, even while I am charmed with sacred melody, I am led astray at times by the luxury of sensations, and offend, not knowing at the time, but afterwards I discover it. Sometimes, guarding against this fallacy, I err in the other extreme, and could wish all the melody of David's Psalms were removed from my ears, and those of the church, and think it safer to imitate the plan of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, who directed a method of repeating the psalms more resembling pronunciation than music. But when I remember my tears of affection at my conversion under the melody of thy church, with which I am still affected, I again acknowledge the utility of the custom. Thus do I fluctuate between the danger of pleasure, and the experience of utility, and am induced, though with a wavering assent, to own that the infirmity of nature may be assisted in devotion by psalmody. Yet when the tune has moved me more than the subject, I feel guilty, and am ready to wish I had not heard the music. See where I am, and mourn with me, ye who are conscious of any inward feelings of godliness. I cannot expect the sympathy of those who are not. Thou, Lord, my God, hear and pity and heal me.

The pleasures of the eye I find to entangle me from time to time. But thou deliverest me, sometimes without pain, because I fall into them gently ; at other times with pain, because I stick in them.

Another form of manifold danger is added, a curious spirit, palliated by the name of knowledge. Surrounded as we are with objects, when can I say I am freed from this? What vehement temptations have I had from the enemy, to ask of thee a sign : But I beseech thee by our king, Jesus Christ, that, as I am far from consenting to it, so I may be farther and farther. What a trifle diverts me from a thought of great importance, and unless thou quickly admonish me by the conviction of my infirmity,

either to divert the thought by some serious meditation, or to despise it altogether, I should become absolutely dull. My life is full of these evils, and even my prayers are often disturbed, and while I apply my heart to thine ears, I am overborne by a torrent of vanities.

What can give hope, except thy mercy, by which thou hast begun to renew us? And thou knowest how much thou hast done for me already. I carry thy yoke, and find it easy, as thou hast promised. It always was so, but I did not believe it, when I was afraid to take it upon me; but thou, O Lord, thou who alone rulest without pride, because thou hast no superior, can I in this life be exempt from pride? Well done, well done, I find scattered in the nets by the enemy every where. Daily, Lord, we feel these temptations. Thou knowest on this head, the groans of my heart, and the floods of mine eyes. Nor can I easily see, that I grow more free from this pest of pride; and I much fear my secret evils, which thou knowest. I am poor and needy, and my best method is to seek thy mercy in secret groans and in self-abhorrence, till thou perfect that which concerneth me.

There is another internal evil, by which a man, without seeking to please others, pleases himself with thy good things, as if they were his own; or if he allows them to be thine, yet he is apt to fancy them bestowed upon him for his own merits; or he pleases himself with indulging an invidious spirit against others. In all these dangers thou seest the trembling of my heart; I feel my wounds healed every now and then by thee; but I feel not an exemption from them. Sometimes thou introducest me into an uncommon affection, into a sweetness past the power of description, which, were it perfected in me, I should not see what life would want to complete its felicity. But I sink back by the weight of misery, and am held entangled.

Whom shall I look to as my mediator? Shall I go to angels? Many have tried this, and have been fond of visions, and have deserved to be the sport of the illusions which they loved. A mediator between God and man must have the nature of both. The true Mediator, whom in thy secret mercy thou hast shown to the humble, and hast sent, that by his example they might also learn humility, the man Christ Jesus, hath appeared a mediator between mortal sinners, and the immortal Holy One, that, because the wages of righteousness is life and peace, by his divine righteousness he might justify the ungodly, and deliver them from death. He was shown to ancient saints, that they might be saved by faith in his future sufferings, as we by faith in the same sufferings already past. How hast thou loved us, Father, delivering up thy only son for us ungodly! For whom he, our priest and sacrifice, who thought it no robbery to be equal with thee, was subjected to death. Well may my hope be strong through such an intercessor; else, I should despair. Many and great are my diseases, thy medicine larger still. Were he not made flesh for us, we could not dream of having any union with him. Terrified with my sins and the weight of my misery, I was desponding, but thou encouragedst me, saying, Christ died for all, that they which live, should not live to themselves, but to him that died for them*. Lo, I cast all my care on thee, Lord, that I may live. Thou knowest my weakness and ignorance, teach and heal me. He hath redeemed me with his blood, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let not the proud calumniate me, if with the poor I desire to eat and be satisfied, and to praise the Lord†.

* 2 Cor. v.

† Psalm xxii. 26. We see in this last book the author's description of the conflict between flesh and spirit after his conversion, and the repose of his soul for peace and happiness only on the Lord Jesus as his righteousness and strength. I shall

Augustine, after his conversion, returned with some friends into Africa, and lived upon his own estate for almost three years, retired from the world. A desire to oblige a person of some consequence in Hippo, who requested his instructions, brought him at length to that city, where Valerius was bishop,—a person of great piety ; but, on account of his slender acquaintance with the Latin tongue, scarcely adequate to the office of pastor in that place. Augustine, through the strong and urgent desires of the people, was ordained presbyter to Valerius ; but wept on the occasion, from the genuine sense which he had of the importance of the office. He told Possidius that his tears were by some misconstrued*, as if he regretted that he had not been chosen bishop. Such poor judges are many, of the views and sensations of godly men ! Valerius rejoiced that God had heard his prayers, and that the people would now be supplied with such a pastor. He gave him licence to preach in the presence of the bishop, a thing before unknown in Africa ; but which from the good effects of this precedent, afterwards grew common. Here his ministry was useful in the instruction and edification of the brethren, and also in the defeat of various heresies. Divine truth, which had been almost buried amidst many schisms and distractions in Africa, now raised up its head again ; and Fortunatus, the great leader of the Manichees, was obliged, in confusion, to leave Hippo, when he found himself by the confession of the hearers, vanquished in a conference with Augustine.

make no further remarks than to repeat his own observation in his retractations. “ These confessions praise the God of righteousness and goodness, and excite the human understanding and affection toward him. They did this in me while I was writing them, and they do it still when I read them. What others may think of them, let them judge ; but I know they have much pleased and do please many of the brethren.”

* Possid. Life of Aug.

Heretics vied with the members of the general church in their attention to the pastoral labours of Augustine, whose fame began gradually to spread throughout the Western world. Valerius rejoiced and gave thanks on the account, and being solicitous to preserve such a treasure to his church, he took care to get Augustine elected bishop of Hippo, in conjunction with himself. Age and infirmities rendered Valerius very inadequate to the work ; and every true Christian will doubt which more to admire, the godly zeal of Augustine tempered with modesty and charity, or the unfeigned humility of Valerius. Augustine, after he had strongly resisted the inclinations of the bishop and all the church, at length accepted the office ; the duties of which he continued to discharge after the decease of Valerius. His zeal and laboriousness increased with his authority. The monastery of his institution became renowned in Africa ; and about ten bishops of undoubted piety, known to our author *, came from this seminary. These instituted monasteries after the same pattern, and from them other churches were supplied with pastors ; and the doctrines of faith, hope, and charity, by these means, and also by Augustine's writings, which were translated into the Greek tongue, were diffused and enforced with increasing vigour through the Christian world. His writings, however, never seem to have had any permanent influence in the Eastern church.

C H A P. III.

THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY.

IT is the part of an intelligent agent to choose the fittest season for the execution of arduous enterprises, or the introduction of important innovations.

* Possid.

This rule, we may safely conclude, is observed by Satan in all his attempts against the Church of Christ. While the belief and experience of divine influences were strong and vigorous in Christian societies, it was in vain for him to attempt to persuade men, that such influences were of no necessity or value : he could do no more than seduce them to counterfeit, abuse, or misapply them. Hence the wildness and incoherence of Montanism. But now that the holy influence of the Spirit of God was generally damped by superstition, or quenched by licentiousness, Satan felt himself emboldened to erect a new heresy, which should pretend to the height of purity, supported by **MERE HUMAN NATURE**, exclusive of the operations of divine grace altogether. This was Pelagianism* : and as this evil now entered the Church for the first time, and in a greater or less degree has continued to this day ; as it is directly subversive of Christianity, and as it introduced a controversy, not trivial and frivolous like many others, but of unspeakable importance, it eminently falls within the plan of this History, to state the circumstances and consequences with perspicuity.

Augustine, of Hippo, had been trained up under the Lord's wholesome discipline, by an extraordinary conversion, as we have seen, during the latter part of the last century. Thus did the all-wise God, who **IS WONDERFUL IN COUNSEL AND EXCELLENT IN WORK**, secretly **STIR UP A SCOURGE** for Pelagius, against the time that he should make his appearance ; and his heresy was eventually one of the grand means of introducing juster views of Gospel grace, than had for a long time obtained in the Church, and of reviving Christian truth, humility and piety. The effects of this effusion of the Spirit

* In this chapter I purpose to describe its rise and progress historically. What I have said of its precise nature, will be confirmed in the proper place by the authentic lights of antiquity.

were solid, though never brilliant, operative during this century and many centuries afterwards, in the production of much real godliness in the minds of many individuals, particularly of monastic persons, to whom for ages, Augustine's writings were a great and useful light; indeed, next to the word of God, the greatest means of grace which they had in times extremely unfavourable to improvement. Hence, besides the immediate benefit which the Church received in his own time, the utility of this providential dispensation reached to the time of the Reformation itself, and even beyond it in Popish countries; though the reader must not expect any great or strong display of the plantation of new churches, or any sudden and marvellous change in the external appearance of the Church. The light we are now to contemplate never broke out into a vivid extensive flame, but shone with faint, though steady rays, with a moderate degree of brightness at first, and afterwards glimmered through many ages.

Pelagius was born in Britain, and was in his own time called Brito*. His companion Cœlestius was an Irishman, by the testimony of Jerom. He calls him a Scot, and that name in those times meant, as is known to the learned, a native of Ireland.

* I make large use of Jansenius in this narrative: he has prefixed the history of the heresy to his treatise called *Augustine*: The account seems accurate, and well supported by authorities of contemporary writers, particularly Jerom and Augustine. I have consulted these two with much care and attention, and I find Jansenius so exact and well-informed in those things of which we have an opportunity to form an estimate, that it seems reasonable to give him credit for his extracts from the *Gesta Pelag. of Aug.*—a work which we have not in the common editions of that father, because it was not discovered till about the time of Jansenius, being found, as he tells us, in an Abbey at Fesulæ, in Italy.

Since I wrote this, I have seen the *Gesta Pelag.* in a more recent edition of Augustine, and am still further confirmed in my opinion of the accurate industry of Jansenius.

They were both laymen ; the former, by profession, a monk, who, as far as appears, always maintained a character of fair and decent morals. In the heat of contention there were who denied this ; but it is admitted by Augustine with his usual candour, and we might have been certain of it, independently of his authority ; because otherwise it would have been impossible for him ever to have become a person of lasting reputation in the religious world. He travelled from monastery to monastery, through various parts of the Empire. His heretical opinions did not appear till he was far advanced in life ; before that time Augustine owns (though he speaks by hearsay) his reputation for serious piety to have been great in the Christian world ; and those who know the difference between holiness and mere morality will not be surprised at this. Augustine allows the genius and capacity of both these men to have been of the first order : and this testimony from him is decisive with me against that of Jerom, who treats the understanding and endowments of both with great contempt ; but Jerom was not apt to allow any laudable qualities to an ADVERSARY.

Isidore of Pelusium applies to Pelagius that passage of Hosea ; “grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.” This author is understood thence to intimate, that he fell into this heresy in old age. It began to appear about the year 404 or 5. Chrysostom, writing to his friend, the deaconess Olympias, says, “I am much grieved for Pelagius the monk ; consider what crowns must be reserved for those who stand firm, when men who have lived in so much mortification and continency, appear to be so carried away.” His first writings were an Epistle to Paulinus of Nola and other little works, in which his erroneous views of grace were so artfully expressed, and so guarded with cautious terms, that Augustine owns he was almost deceived by them. But when he saw his other

Pelagianism
appears
about
A. D.
404.
or
405.

writings of a later date, he discerned that he might artfully own the word GRACE, and by retaining the term, break the force of prejudice, and avoid offence, and yet conceal his meaning under a general ambiguity.

For, by a dexterity very common with heretics, Pelagius, while he laid open to his converts the whole mystery of his doctrine, imparted only so much to others as might be more calculated to ensnare their affections than to inform them of his real opinions. He used to deliver his views under the modest appearance of queries, started against the doctrines of the church, and those as not invented by himself but by others. The effect of poisoning the minds of men was, perhaps, more powerfully produced by this, than it would have been by a more direct and positive method. To this he added another artifice; he insinuated himself into the favour of women of some rank, of weak minds, and unacquainted with the spirit of the Gospel, though professing religion; and, by their means, he diffused his tenets with much success. Cœlestius, more open and daring in speech, pursued a method not so replete with deceit, and was therefore exposed to detection more easily than his master.

Pelagius, having travelled over the monasteries of Egypt, settled at length at Rome, where his attempts to undermine the whole doctrine of divine grace, by degrees, notwithstanding all his caution, gave umbrage to the Church. Unguarded moments also will happen to the most artful, and at times discover them to the most unwary. A bishop, who was a colleague of Augustine, mentioning to Pelagius those words of the Confessions, "Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt;" he contradicted with great vehemence, and expressed much indignation at the sentiment.

Rome being taken by the Goths about the year 410, numbers fled into Africa, and among the rest

Rome
taken and
plundered
by the
Goths,

A. D.
410.



the two heresiarchs. Pelagius was received at Hippo, in Augustine's absence, where his stay was very short. The bishop of Hippo saw him once or twice at Carthage ; but was himself very busy in settling a conference with the Donatists, and nothing material passed between them. Pelagius leaving Africa passed over into Palestine : there his labours attracted the attention of Jerom, who lived a monastic life in the same country, and wrote against his opinions, justly calling on him to speak clearly what he meant, and complaining of his ambiguities.

Pelagius
spreads his
errors in
Palestine.

In the mean time Cœlestius in Africa more openly discovered his sentiments, and made such attempts to propagate them in Carthage itself, that he was summoned to appear before a synod, which was held by Aurelius, bishop of that city. He was accused of denying original sin ; and when he was pressed with the custom of the Church in baptizing infants, as a proof of her belief in all ages that infants needed redemption, he declared that they had no need of remission, and yet ought to be baptized, that they might be sanctified in Christ. Cœlestius was condemned as a heretic in the year 412, and disappointed of his hopes of rising in the church ; for he had either obtained or was about to obtain the office of a presbyter, in Africa.

Cœlestius
in Africa.

Cœlestius is
condemned
at Carthage
as a heretic,
A. D.
412.

A fragment of the acts of this synod is preserved by Augustine*, though he himself was not present at it, in which is the following passage : “ Aurelius said, Read what follows, and it was read : That the sin of Adam hurt himself alone, and not mankind. Cœlestius said, I owned that I was dubious concerning the communication of sin by descent from Adam (yet in such a manner, that I shall bow to the authority of those to whom God hath given the grace of superior skill) ; because I have heard different things from those who at least were presbyters in the church. Paulinus, a deacon, said, Name them.

* In his book on Original Sin, cap. 3.

Cœlestius answered, The holy presbyter* Ruffinus at Rome : I heard him deny any communication of sin by descent. Being pressed, if he could name any more, he said, Is not one priest sufficient? On being asked, whether he had not asserted, that infants are born in a state in which Adam was before transgression, all that could be obtained from him was, That infants needed baptism, and ought to be baptized †."

Indeed Pelagianism itself seemed little more than a revival of Deism, or what is commonly called natural religion. Adam, it was said, would have died, whether he sinned or not. Men might be saved by the Law, as well as the Gospel : infants just born are in the same state as Adam before transgression. Men's death depends not on that of Adam, nor does their resurrection depend on that of Christ. These tenets were objected to Cœlestius, and condemned. In a book which he offered to the council, he owned that children were redeemed by Christ, and yet he would not confess that the effects of Adam's sin passed upon them. So inconsistent are men, bent on the support of error, and yet willing to appear in some measure Christian !

In the mean time Pelagius, in his manner, was still writing against the doctrines of the Gospel ; while Augustine, than whom no man was ever more cautious and deliberate in the whole controversy,

* This is he, who was famous for his controversy with Jerom, and for the translation of Origen's works, and of whom, though he seems to be not much in the line of our history, we shall have occasion to say a little more hereafter.

† Two plain inferences seem deducible from this fragment ; 1. That the right of baptizing infants was allowed on all sides to have been of apostolical and primitive authority. It is impossible that men so shrewd and learned as Cœlestius and his master, would not have objected to the novelty of infant-baptism, had it been a novelty. 2. The belief of original sin had universally obtained, and must have been equally apostolical. One presbyter only was named by Cœlestius, as favouring the doctrine of Pelagius.

answered in his writings the evil tendency of the Pelagian tenets, “avoiding,” says he*, “the name of Pelagius, thinking that I might more easily profit him, if, preserving friendship, I should yet spare his modesty.” But more of this hereafter.

Cœlestius, driven from Africa, fixed his seat in Sicily, and by the questions which he there excited, gave occasion to Augustine to employ his pen in answering him. Nor did the heresy cease in Africa: the bishop of Hippo was employed not only in writing, but also in preaching against the new notions, and gave his testimony in a solemn manner from the pulpit at Carthage.

Pelagius himself wrote in the most respectful manner to Augustine, and in the highest terms extolled his character. It is certain, that the impressions made on Augustine’s mind in favour of Pelagius were strong, and not easily erased, because he had been taught to believe him to be a person of great virtue. Nothing but the completest evidence of heresy could have induced him to make an open rupture. And a soul like his, humble and charitable in a high degree, would, I doubt not, long entertain the best hopes of a man whom he had once esteemed. In this spirit he wrote to him the following guarded letter:

“I thank you for your kind letter. The Lord requite you good, by which you may be ever good, and live with the Eternal for ever. Though I cannot own the good things in myself, which your friendly Epistle mentions, yet I should be ungrateful did I not thank you; at the same time admonishing you rather to pray for me, that I may become such, from the Lord, as you think me to be.”

In the year 413 an occasion was offered to Pelagius of discovering himself more openly to the world. A virgin, named Demetrias, of the illustrious race of the Anicii, one of the most ancient

Pelagius’s
Letter to
a Virgin
named
Demetrias,
A. D.
413.

* Lib. de Gestis Pelag.

and noble families of Rome, having fled into Africa on account of the invasion of the Goths, was, by the exhortation of Augustine, induced to consecrate her virginity to God. The piety of the action was extolled in these superstitious days by all the Christian world, and the bishop of Hippo joined with others in congratulating her. For sufficient proof has already appeared, that he escaped not the infection of the age, though he mixed with it as much real humility as most persons of those times. Pelagius wrote to her a long and extremely elegant letter, exhorting her to seek true perfection, in which he plainly directs her to look to nature, not to grace, for strength : yet, it is written with so much artifice, that in his apology afterwards to Innocent, bishop of Rome, he appeals to it as a justification of his orthodoxy *. Augustine, some years after, wrote a refutation of it, addressed to Juliana, the mother of Demetrias. Pelagius wrote also another letter to a certain widow, full of the same adulatory strains, in which he so grossly discovers himself, that, as will shortly appear, he had no way left but to disown it.

Timasius
and Jacob.
A. D.
415.

In the year 415, or nearly so, two well-disposed young men, Timasius and Jacob, meeting with Pelagius, were by him induced to enter on the monastic life, in the commendation of which all parties were but too strongly agreed. But they imbibed also his self-righteous doctrine, from which, however, by the labours of Augustine, they were afterwards delivered. On this occasion, they showed Augustine a book of Pelagius, in which he vehemently accused those who pleaded the faultiness of human nature as an excuse for their sins, and in which, while he seemed to be only inveighing against a licentious abuse of Gospel grace, he evidently denied the existence of all grace, and maintained, that by that term were to be understood the natural

* A further view of this letter shall be given hereafter, among what may be called the PELAGIAN PAPERS.

endowments of the human mind SEASONED and directed by free-will ; and these endowments, so seasoned and directed, he acknowledged to be the free gifts of God. The bishop of Hippo, with extreme reluctance, at length admitted the full conviction of the heretical character of Pelagius, and answered the book ; yet he concealed his name, lest Pelagius, being offended, might become still more incurable. Augustine owns that he afterwards repented of this step, because he had probably increased the pride of the heretic, through an ill-judged fear of giving him pain.

For Pelagius, hearing of Augustine's proceedings, loudly complained that some of his books had been stolen from him ; and others reckoned as his, which were not so. It is difficult to deal with deceitful men ; yet the African bishop used the most prudent method. He sent his own book and Pelagius's together to Innocent, of Rome, desiring him to mark the sentiments of each, "and if he denies that these are his sentiments, I contend not ; let him anathematize them, and in plain terms confess the doctrine of Christian grace. I have, says he, sufficient witnesses, men who have a great regard for him, who will attest that I had the book from them, and that it has not been falsified by me." Innocent, in reply, condemned the book altogether, as containing horrible sentiments, hitherto unprecedented in the Christian world. How much more reputable would it be to the characters of many, like Pelagius, would they at once own what they are, and make no pretensions to the doctrines of grace ! But this sincerity would not so effectually serve the cause of Satan in the world.

While Jerom in the East, and Augustine in the West, were opposing Pelagianism, the heresiarch himself was summoned to appear in the latter end of the same year 415, before a synod of fourteen bishops of Palestine, at Lydda, then called Diospolis. Here he had every advantage, which an

Pelagius
summoned
before the
Synod of
Diospolis.

accused person could wish for. His two accusers, Heros and Lazarus, bishops of Gaul, were absent, because one of them was sick at that time. The court were poorly acquainted with the Latin tongue in which the works of Pelagius were written, and John of Jerusalem, one of the principal bishops, was prejudiced in favour of Origenism, and of Pelagius. The Eastern church itself was more corrupt in doctrine, and more inclined to support innovations than the Western; and the heresiarch himself, in capacity, presence of mind, and circumspection, far exceeded all his judges.

Yet the letter to the widow above mentioned was so fulsome, and so replete with self-righteous doctrine, that he found it necessary to deny, that he had written the things imputed to him. He had described her as the only righteous person upon earth, with whom piety found a refuge, when it could find none elsewhere; and he taught her to pray in this form: "Thou knowest, Lord, how holy, innocent, and clean these hands are which I extend to thee, how just and clean these lips, and free from all guile, with which I pray for thy mercy." In no part of his conduct did he lay himself more open to censure. He preached a perfection, attainable in this life, a perfection too, drawn altogether from nature. However, by denying this charge, and by dexterously evading and explaining away all the rest*, he obtained an honourable acquittal. If there was any fault at all in the conduct of Augustine toward this man, it was a fault indeed of the most amiable kind, an excess of tenderness and lenity. Pelagius knew how to take advantage of it, and produced to the court the short letter of the bishop of Hippo to him, which has been given above.

John, bishop of Jerusalem, defended Pelagius in the synod with great earnestness, and he was at last received as a Christian brother. Flushed with his

Pelagius
defended
by the
bishop of
Jerusalem.

* Gest. Pelag. The recital of the particulars would be tedious and uninteresting.

victory, he prepared to improve the advantage which it gave him. Though he was acquitted, as holding the doctrines of grace and not as inimical to them, he wrote to a friend, that fourteen bishops had agreed with him, that man might be without sin, and easily keep the commands of God, if he would; concealing at the same time his confession of the necessity of divine grace, by which he had eluded condemnation. With similar artifice, he transmitted an account to Augustine of his acquittal. He wrote also four books on free-will, in which he openly took away original sin, and gloried at the same time in the acts of the synod in Palestine. And his partisans, being incensed against Jerom and the Roman ladies who lived in monasteries under his direction in Palestine, made a scandalous assault upon them, of which Jerom complained to Innocent of Rome, who afterwards expostulated with John, bishop of Jerusalem, for conniving at the burnings and plunderings of which the Pelagians had been guilty. Augustine also wrote to John in a mild but firm tone, to undeceive him concerning the real doctrines of Pelagius, and sent him both his own treatise on Nature and Grace and that of Pelagius; and receiving afterwards the acts of the synod of Diospolis, he published the history of Pelagianism, from which we have taken many of the foregoing particulars.

A council being held the next year at Carthage, on various exigencies of the church, Orosius, returning from Palestine, brought them the letters of Heros and Lazarus against Pelagius. Though the acts of the Eastern council had not yet reached this African synod, yet they had now sufficient information to alarm their minds. The council wrote to Innocent of Rome their plain sense of the controversy, which was—that unless Pelagius and his partisans, in express terms rejected the sentiments ascribed to him, they should be excommunicated, to prevent others from being imposed on by false pre-

Council of
Carthage.

tensions*. These equitable determinations were signed by sixty-eight bishops. Another synod of Numidian bishops, assembled at Milevum, wrote also to Rome to the same effect. Augustine also, his friend Alypius, now bishop of Tagasta, Aurelius of Carthage, and two other bishops, wrote letters in their own names to Innocent, more distinctly explaining the subject, and showing how the Eastern council most probably had been imposed on by the subtilty of Pelagius ; at the same time intimating their fear, lest Rome itself, where he had long lived, should be infected with the heresy. Innocent, in his answer, entered fully into the views of the Africans, and in the same conditional manner condemned the authors of the heresy. As it however still spread in a secret manner, it needed to be extirpated by argument. For this the bishop of Hippo was peculiarly qualified. And for more than twenty years he was employed in writing and preaching against the heresy.

Cœlestius
comes to
Rome,

A. D.
417.

The two heresiarchs now endeavoured to elude the force of the decrees against them. Cœlestius, who had been in Asia for some time, and had obtained the office of presbyter, visited Rome in the year 417. He applied to Zozimus, the successor of Innocent, and recited his libel before him. And here, with an unlimited degree of complaisance, he submitted his sentiments implicitly to the bishop of Rome, professing a desire to be corrected by him,

* I wonder not that the advocates for the papacy have argued from these frequent appeals to Rome, for the infallibility and dominion of the Pope. But the truth is, nothing could be farther from the thoughts of the Africans. We shall see shortly that they withstand and correct the errors of a Roman bishop ; nor have I seen any thing in Augustine's voluminous writings that indicates such a subjection. The word of God was as yet allowed to be the great standard of doctrine ; and the frequent correspondence with Rome arose from the importance of the situation of that church as fixed in the metropolis of the Empire, and as being the centre of intelligence to the Christian world.

if as a man he erred in any point, and complained of the precipitation with which he had been condemned.

Zozimus, deceived by his artifices, wrote to the African prelates, complaining of the malice of the Gaulish bishops, and declaring, that unless within two months he heard more decisive proofs against Cœlestius, he should consider him as a Christian brother. The African bishops, in reply, complained of the precipitation of Zozimus, and at length sent to Rome such complete proofs against Cœlestius, that he withdrew himself from the examination, and avoided the means of a public detection. Zozimus however still delayed his condemnation, for which he is justly blamed by Augustine*.

Pelagius, using the same methods which Cœlestius did, wrote to Innocent, with whose death he was unacquainted. Some fragments of his letters are preserved by Augustine. A sample of them is as follows : “ Lo, let this epistle clear me before you, in which I say that we have a free-will to sin and not to sin, which in all good works is always helped by divine aid.” And “ this power we say is in all in general, in Christians, Jews, and Gentiles. In all there is free-will equally by nature, but in Christians alone it is helped by grace. In others there is a good condition, naked and unarmed ; in those who belong to Christ, it is fortified by his assistance. Persons therefore are to be condemned, who, when they have free-will, by which they might come to faith, and obtain the grace of God, abuse their liberty : but those are to be rewarded, who, using free-will aright, obtain the favour of God, and keep his commands.” He adds more to the same purpose, never once either admitting the doctrine of original sin, or defining what he means by divine assistance, which with him may mean no more than the benefit of external revelation, or the preserva-

* B. 2. to Bonif. c. 3.

tion of our natural powers. Had he once expressly declared, that he did not believe any real influence of divine grace on the mind inclining it to what is good, which he knew the Christian world before his time believed, and which if he himself had believed, he would have expressed; there would have been an honesty in his heretical pravity, which would have entitled his character to a greater degree of respect. As the case stands, and, as he must have known that his opponent used the terms grace and divine assistance in a quite different sense from that in which he used them, he appears by his own words to have been an insincere disputant. He sent also to Rome a symbol of his faith, written in the same style of ambiguity, and attended with the same adulatory strains to the bishop of Rome, which Cœlestius had used on the like occasion.

Zozimus, to whom his letters came, was imposed on by them, as he had been by those of Cœlestius; and he wrote to the African bishops, that he was convinced, that Pelagius was innocent. The latter answered him very properly, that it was not sufficient for Pelagius and Cœlestius to own in general that they approved of all that he approved of; that it behoved them expressly to confess, that we need the grace of Jesus Christ not only to know, but also to do righteousness in every act. Thus they showed that they had, what Zozimus had not, a clear and accurate conception of the subject. But they had Augustine among them: whereas men, whose consciences have had little exercise on these subjects, are seldom quick in comprehending them, nay, are apt to be imposed on by plausible terms, though they be in other respects men of enlarged and cultivated understandings.

Zozimus was, however, open to conviction; for the bishops of Rome had not yet learned to be INFALLIBLE. The instructions of Augustine corrected his mistakes, and being further acquainted

with the subject by some writings of Pelagius, which were brought to him at Rome, he openly condemned the two heretics. Whether he had done so or not, there is not the slightest ground to believe, that the African bishops and churches would not have persevered, by their own authority, in rejecting Pelagianism: but the concurrence of the bishop of Rome was doubtless of great service to the general cause of Christian truth at this period. It has often been said, that men called heretics have not the advantage of being heard, because their writings are not extant. I have therefore been solicitous to furnish the reader with all the light which can be obtained on that side of the question. Notwithstanding the scantiness of materials, Arius I think was sufficiently proved guilty from his own mouth, and so was Pelagius; but of the latter we have much larger remains. On this occasion it will be proper to mention a passage from his exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, quoted by Zozimus, as it shows at the same time the strength of his prejudices and the shrewdness of his understanding. “If Adam’s sin hurt those who were not guilty, the righteousness of Christ profits those who believe not.”

The Pelagians bitterly censured Sixtus, a presbyter of Rome, afterwards bishop, for being active in condemning those whom before he had patronized. Augustine exposed their unreasonableness in reviling that very lenity and caution which had been so slow to condemn, till the fullest evidence was obtained, and admonished Sixtus not to be content with anathematizing Pelagius, but to be also laborious in warning and teaching the people.

The Emperor Honorius also passed the sentence of banishment from Rome on the Pelagians the same year in which their doctrines were condemned, that is, the year 418. Cœlestius, retired to Constantinople, where his tenets were opposed by Atticus the bishop, and his views of propagating them were dis-

Pelagians
banished
by Hono-
rius,

A. D.
418.

appointed. The party were, however, indefatigable; letters were written to the bishop of Thessalonica, in which they professed their desire to defend the Catholic faith against the heresy of the Manichees, and in that specious manner they vindicated their praises of the powers of human nature. Augustine answered their arguments, which had been sent by eighteen of the party to Thessalonica* ; Atticus also wrote against them to Rome, and the sect underwent a general condemnation.

Pelagius, who was still in Palestine, complained of the treatment which he had received, and being interrogated there concerning the disputed points by some persons of respectable characters, he answered with such subtile ambiguity, that he again imposed on his examiners, who explained to Augustine in writing the result. The latter, roused by repeated acts of dissimulation, wrote his treatise on Original Sin and the Grace of Christ, in which he detected and exposed the artifices of Pelagius. The wiles of the party were not yet exhausted: they charged the general Church with condemning marriage, and the workmanship of God in the creation of man; I suppose maliciously deducing those consequences from the doctrine of original sin: and this drew another reply from the argumentative pen of Augustine †.

One Julian, a young person of great spirit and self-confidence, now arose in defence of Pelagianism, and wrote with great vehemence and asperity, and in a very voluminous manner. He described himself as the little David, who was to fight against the Goliath of Hippo, and declared that it was proper to decide the contest by a single combat, while the rest of the church should be in peace. I love to lay open to the reader all along the connexion between principle and practice: and, if I show not the indisputable superiority of the orthodox Christians, in disposition and temper, I miss one of the most

* B. 1. to Boniface.

† B. 1 de nup.

important points, which I have in view through the whole history. Indeed the strength and excellence of Augustine's cause lies in its tendency to promote humility, while the weakness and turpitude of the Pelagian cause lies in supporting the spirit of pride. How can this be shown better than by proving from facts, that the Pelagians were proud men, and that those who sincerely embraced the doctrines of grace were humble. To the boasting language of Julian, Augustine modestly replied, "Who promised you a single combat on my side? Where, when, how, who were present, who the arbiters? Far be it from me to assume to myself* in the general church, what you are not ashamed to do among the Pelagians. I am one of the many who refute your profane novelties as we can." The most specious argument used by Julian was the use made of the imperial sanction against his party. How far the secular arm ought to be applied to the support of religion, has been already considered; and it was the duty of the magistrate then, as at all times, to determine how far the good of the people committed to his charge is connected with the spreading of opinions. I recollect, however, no account of any particular cruelties; nor does any thing more seem to have been actually done against the Pelagians by the state, than barely to inhibit the dissemination of their doctrines†.

Another argument used by Julian was drawn from the pains taken by the adversaries of Pelagius to seduce the people. Finding the vulgar every where

* B. 6. contra Julian.

Apud Catholicos. In general I choose to avoid the expression of Catholics, and prefer the term general church as more proper, in opposition to the unfair use made of the word by the Papists.

† I have rather laid down the principles on which the civil power should act in a case of this nature, than given any opinion of the rectitude or impropriety of its conduct in the case of the Pelagians. Let the reader judge for himself; the labours of the ecclesiastics in councils and writings stand on a very different foundation.

prejudiced against the Pelagians, he speaks of the dregs of the populace stirred up against them, mariners, cooks, butchers, &c.* : but this is no uncommon event. The doctrines of grace, persecuted and despised, as they always have been by the great, bid fair for a more unprejudiced hearing among the poor. The common people heard our Lord gladly. The doctrines, which represent the misery of man and his need of grace, speak to the consciences of men ; and those, whom deceitful learning and vain philosophy have not sophisticated, cannot but receive some impression. Pelagianism, so far as it respects the doctrines of sanctifying grace, is pretty much the same thing with that which is now called Socinianism. The abettors of the latter make the same complaints of the common people at this day ; and they may thank themselves for the desertion of their congregations. Julian inscribed his writings to one Turbantius, a bishop, whom he highly commends ; but this bishop afterwards forsook Pelagianism.

Cœlestius
expelled
Rome by
an edict,
A. D.
420.

Notwithstanding the emperor's sentence in 418, Cœlestius ventured again to show himself in Rome, and about the year 420 was again expelled by an edict. Pelagianism being now reduced to the lowest ebb, Satan seems to have changed his mode of attacking the church, by inducing some ignorant persons, under a mistaken idea of honouring the doctrines of grace, to support opinions subversive of the free agency of man, and particularly to forbid men to rebuke sinners, and direct them only to pray for their conversion †. Augustine obviated these mistakes, and explained the consistency between the divine

* Aug. contra Julian, B. 2.

† See Mosheim, Vol. I. Quarto Edit. p. 189. It is not the business of an history to enlarge on the metaphysical difficulties with which this subject is necessarily clouded. I shall only here refer the reader to Edwards's masterly treatise on Free-will, which I think has not yet been answered. Had Mosheim better understood the grounds of the subject of human liberty, he would not so rashly have charged Augustine with inconsistency.

grace and human duty in his treatise on Rebuke and Grace.

The two heresiarchs, after this, were reduced to a state which is of all others the most grating to proud minds, a state of obscurity. The island of Britain, it is certain, was afterwards disturbed with their doctrines, which, by the skill and authority of Germanus, whom we shall have occasion to mention hereafter, were confuted and overcome. Hence it is probable, that Pelagius, after having travelled through the Roman empire, and attempted in vain to overturn the doctrines of grace, retired to his native country. But nothing certain seems to be known further, either concerning him or Cœlestius.

There was a person named Leporius, a monk, afterwards a presbyter, who boasted of his purity, and ascribed it to his own power, and not to the grace of God. The man, however, was instructed by some teachers in Gaul, and particularly by the labours of Augustine, to know himself better. In Africa he publicly owned the folly of his pride, and wrote also into Gaul a very humble confession of his self-righteousness. I know not how to obtain a sight of his writings; but they would probably give us an edifying view of the conversion of a Pharisee*.

If Satan cannot gain his point entirely, in aspersing the grace of God, he will be content to do it in part. And this, for the trial of men's sincerity, was unhappily the case in regard to this present controversy. Pure Pelagianism itself was lost, at least for many ages: nor did any man dare, for a long series of years, to revive it. The works of Augustine were found so agreeable to the Scriptures, that while they were regarded as the sole standard of Christian authority, a doctrine which set aside the necessity of grace altogether could gain no hearing in the church. And in the Western world such an addition of light

* Cassian, B. 1. de Incar. Christi.

was obtained, as no doubt proved highly serviceable to advance the kingdom of Christ. But tares were sown: Semi-Pelagianism arose, and maintained itself among many, and continues to this day the admired system of all those who seek to unite the arts of secular greatness with some regard for Christian orthodoxy. Its language is, that though man cannot persevere in virtue without divine grace, yet he can turn himself at first to God. Vitalis, of Carthage, seems to have been its beginner, who taught that our obedience to the Gospel was no otherwise the effect of grace, than that men cannot believe, except the word be preached to them. Thus, external revelation was put in the room of the secret, effectual energy of the Holy Spirit. The Pelagians, who had lost their first ground, retreated hither, and maintained, that grace was given according to that merit of men, which they showed in attending to the word and to prayer. Some presbyters in Marseilles were at the head of this scheme, which is so specious, and carries such an air of moderation between vicious extremes, that it seems folly to oppose it by any other arms than those of Scripture and experience. Men, who know themselves, and suffer the decisions of the divine word to prevail over their consciences; will see through the delusion, which can scarcely fail to overcome all whose religion is theory without conscience.

John Cassian, a Scythian, a monk of eminence, and a man much renowned at that time, was the pillar of this doctrine. He lived at Marseilles, and opposed the bishop of Hippo. Prosper and Hilary withstood him, and some monuments of the writings of the former will afterwards be considered. In consequence of their desires, Augustine wrote his two last books on Predestination, and the gift of perseverance. Still, however, the contest between Semi-Pelagianism, and the adversaries to it, continued some time; Cassian labouring on one side, and Prosper and Hilary on the other.

Such was the rise, progress, and consequences of this most important heresy in the Church of Christ. THERE MUST INDEED BE HERESIES IN THE CHURCH, THAT THEY WHICH ARE APPROVED MAY BE MADE MANIFEST. The effects of them are, that the wicked in the church are more distinctly separated from the godly; the former are made worse, or at least appear so to be; the latter are purified and made white, and every way improved, both in the understanding, spirit, and power of true religion. Let frivolous controversies, which involve no nutrimental truths of godliness, be hushed and buried in oblivion, as soon as possible, because they are incapable of producing any thing but strife and vanity. But it was indefensible in Mosheim to lament over the Pelagian disputes, as erroneous on both sides, when in truth the controversy was the same which has ever been between holy men and mere men of the world; between grace and human merit*; and though in Augustine's time the question turned principally upon sanctification, in Luther's time on justification, yet the glory of God in the grace of Jesus Christ, the importance of genuine faith, and the nature and efficacy of the influences of the Holy Ghost, were equally concerned in the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius, between Luther and the Papists, and I will venture to say, on scriptural grounds, between Paul the Apostle and Saul of Tarsus,—that is, between the spirit and doctrine of an humbled publican, and of a self-righteous Pharisee.

* See Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. page 57, compared with page 278, Quarto Edit. Vol. I. That he, who in one place maintains the importance of justification by faith, should in another despise the controversies occasioned by it, seems a great and manifest inconsistency.

CHAP. IV.

PELAGIAN DOCUMENTS.

CHAP.
IV.

THE question, “Whether man needs the influence of the Holy Spirit to render him truly pious and holy, or he has sufficient resources in his own nature for this end,” involves so much of the very essence and genius of Christianity, that compared with it a thousand other objects of debate in the church are reduced to mere insignificance. For on the right resolution of this question will depend, what ideas we ought to form of the Christian doctrines of original sin, regeneration, salvation by the grace of Jesus Christ, and sanctification by the Holy Ghost. All parties are convinced that men ought to be good and virtuous ; but does it therefore follow that the Pelagian opinions on these points imply no more than a mere nominal difference of system ? So men are always willing to represent the subject, who have no sense of innate depravity. But those who feel themselves “tied and bound with the chain of their sins,” will think it of essential importance to inquire, how they may be freed from this state ; nor can they be contented with the external decencies of morality, while they find themselves void of the love of God and internal holiness. The Scripture decides this controversy clearly and amply ; but it is my business to state as faithfully as I can the sentiments of the ancient church upon it. Till Pelagius arose, the necessity of internal efficacious grace was not disputed. He denied the existence of such a principle altogether ; though, as we have seen, with much artificial equivocation. I must do justice to both parties ; and review briefly, yet clearly, the sentiments of those who distinguished themselves in the controversy. One conclusion to be drawn from the whole is this, that as there is no new thing under the sun,

so the Lord raises up from age to age, men to defend his real truths in the world.

I shall begin with taking some notice of a treatise found in the works of Ambrose, which I omitted in the review of his writings, because, both the difference of style, and the reference in it to the Pelagian controversy, which was after his time, demonstrate it not to be his. Much has been said * to determine who was the author of it. Its title is, *OF THE VOCATION OF ALL THE GENTILES*. Whoever wrote it †, he was evidently a person well versed in Scripture, master of a good style, and well skilled in argumentation. As he has exhibited that moderate view of the doctrine of grace, which I think most agreeable to Scripture, and remarkably coincident with the doctrines of the Church of England, it will be proper to mention his leading thoughts, as a suitable introduction to the rest.

Ambrose
on the Vo-
cation of the
Gentiles.

He begins, like a man of deep reflection, conscious of the difficulties which his subject involves: "A great and arduous question," says he, "is agitated between the defenders of Free-will and the preachers of the Grace of God. It is inquired, whether God would have all men to be saved? and as this is undeniable, it is further inquired, why the will of the Almighty is not fulfilled?—Thus, no limit is found of contrary disputations, while men do not distinguish what is manifest from what is secret." He describes the effects of the Fall as destructive of faith, hope, understanding, and will, for the purposes of holiness and salvation; and he affirms, that no man has any resources for deliverance; because, though by natural understanding he may endeavour to oppose his vices, and may, in an outward way, adorn this temporal life, yet he cannot proceed to true virtue and eternal bliss. "For without the worship of

* See Du Pin's elaborate criticism in his Hist. of Cent. V.

† It seems, however, to have been the production of this century.

God, what seems to be virtue, is sin, and cannot please God*.”—Let no man trust in human strength, which, even when entire, stood not ; but let him seek victory by Him, who alone is invincible, and conquered for all. And if he seeks, let him not doubt but that the desire of seeking has been received from Him whom he seeks.—He goes on to quote the well-known passages from the prophets, concerning the effectual grace of God. “ For he writes his laws on their hearts, that they may receive the knowledge of God, not by man’s teaching, but by the instruction of the great Teacher, because neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase—To this day is fulfilled what the Lord promised to Abraham without condition, and gave without law.—And those who obey not the Gospel are the more inexcusable ; but it is certain that they are not according to the foreknowledge of God the sons of Abraham. He promised that these should obey, when he said, I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. He promised that they should persevere, when he said, I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

He takes particular notice of the direction, in the first Epistle to Timothy, of praying for all men without exception ; and observes, that it was regarded in all Christian assemblies ; and that the church prayed not only for the regenerate, but for all, even the worst of characters. “ And, what she prayed for them was, doubtless, that they might be converted. And, as conversion was what it was not in their power to do for themselves, the merciful and just Lord would have us to pray for all, that where we see innumerable persons recovered from such an abyss of evil, we may not doubt that God has performed these great things ; and praising him

* See Article XIII. of the Church of England.

for what he has done, may hope he will still do the same for those who are yet in darkness. As for those, for whom the prayers of the church are not heard, we ought to refer it to the secrets of Divine Justice. We know but in part. O the depth!—”

Thus does this judicious Divine resolve into human ignorance the great difficulty which has agitated men of thought in all ages. Whoever is disposed to do the same will have no objection to admit the doctrine of election IN THIS SENSE ; nor is any other submission of the understanding required, than that reasonable one which bishop Butler so admirably enforces in his Analogy. “The redemption of Christ, he observes, would be looked on in a mean light, if Justification, which is by grace, were made to depend on previous merits.—If then grace find some of the vilest characters, whom it adopts in the very departure out of life, when yet many, who seem less guilty, are void of this gift, who can say this is without the dispensation of God?” And he goes on to prove salvation to be of mere grace altogether, by a happy arrangement of Scripture passages.

“If it be asked, why the Saviour of all men has not given this sensation to all to know the true God and his Son Jesus Christ,—what God hath secreted from us should not be investigated ; what he hath manifested should not be denied. No genius whatever can discover the reasons of the divine dispensation in these things. Doubtless, however, the whole good of man, from the beginning of faith to the consummation of perseverance, is a divine work and gift.” Yet he demonstrates, that men’s departure from God is the consequence of their own will, and not properly the act of a divine constitution. And he proves from Scripture likewise, that Christ died for all men, and that he is so to be preached to all the world *. He maintains †, on the

* B. 2. c. vi.

† C. x.

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whole, three propositions: 1st, That it is the property of the Divine Goodness to desire that all may be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. 2d, That every one who is saved is directed by the grace of God, and by the same grace kept unto the end. The 3d modestly protests, that not all the plan of the divine will can be comprehended, and that many causes of divine works are above human understanding. "If insidious malignity will stop, if insolent presumption will demur, these things being firmly established, we need not distract ourselves with endless questions."

But enough has been said to give the reader an idea of this author, whose thoughts and views of Scripture are greatly superior to those of the fourth and fifth centuries in general. Whosoever he was, he seems to have taken up his pen toward the close of the Pelagian controversy in a modest and temperate spirit.

So exactly are his sentiments coincident with those of the best and wisest in all ages of Christianity, that we may see the great benefit resulting to the church, in the event, from the Pelagian controversy; and while we look at the writings of the rest, his ideas will stand as a model, solid and scriptural.

St. Peter tells us of those who PRIVILY bring in damnable heresies*. In Pelagius this insidiousness we have observed to be very remarkable: but it seems a common character of heresy. A free and open and consistent support of what is believed to be true is as common a mark of genuine orthodoxy. I shall attempt, however, to lay before the reader, so far as the deceitfulness of the man and the scantiness of materials will afford, a view of Pelagianism from Pelagius's own mouth. Some of the documents have been glanced at in the course of the history already. Besides these, he wrote, in imitation of Cyprian, a treatise of Testimonies. Jerom gives an account

* 2 Peter, ii. 1.

of this work, and from him it appears, that it contained the same things which were objected to him in the Palestine synod. He wrote also some short notes on St. Paul's Epistles, doubtless with a view to accommodate them to his own system. I have repeatedly to regret, that the works of the fathers have come down to us so highly injured by fraud. Here is a remarkable instance: some short notes on St. Paul's Epistles are subjoined to Jerom's undoubted comments, which were certainly not written by Jerom, an open Anti-Pelagian, but must have been written by Pelagius himself, or some genuine disciple of his. They agree with the account, which Augustine gives of Pelagius's work of this sort; and certainly St. Paul's expression, in the ninth of the Romans, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth," is interpreted in the Pseudo-Jerom exactly as Augustine tells us Pelagius interpreted it*. On the passage, "without the law sin was dead," the commentator asserts, they are mad who assert that sin is derived to us from Adam. Nor will he allow, that Adam and Christ introduced, the one sin, the other righteousness into the world, in any other sense than by example. He all along supports that forced interpretation. On the passage, "by the offence of one many be dead," he observes, because not only sinners, but righteous men also die by a common and natural death. What St. Paul speaks of concupiscence he will allow to be understood only of depraved habit; and in the seventh of

* B. de gest. Pelag. c. xvi.—See Jansenius, B. 1.—Pelagius said, that it was to be understood as spoken by an adversary, that the Apostle was personating one who was finding fault, and asking how St. Paul's doctrine of free-will could stand, since it does not depend on him that wills or runs, but on God that sheweth mercy. Thus is St. Paul made to defend a doctrine quite opposite to the whole current of his argument; and that which he really maintained is put into the mouth of an adversary. However strained and unnatural the interpretation be, it has been equalled by modern Pelagians, who are commonly called Socinians.

Romans maintains that St. Paul speaks in an assumed character. The works of the law which cannot justify, he maintains to be circumcision and the other rites of the Mosaic law, and not moral works. And the grace derived from Christ, he contends to be his example. Something he allows of grace in the forgiveness of sins, nothing in the effectual work of sanctification. Charity, he observes, is from ourselves : and he maintains also, that real saints are perfect and spotless. Predestination also he excludes, except what is founded on the foreknowledge of men's faith and obedience.

Thus it appears that heresies are revived, from age to age, with new names, and under new dresses, carrying the appearance of something original, and not allowed to be the same things which had been long ago exploded and refuted. For how often have we heard all this, which appears to be real Pelagianism, maintained in our own times * ?

The last treatise, which we have reviewed, was probably that of Pelagius altogether, or certainly it belonged to some of his disciples, and is itself a sufficient proof, that his tenets were not misrepresented by his antagonists †. Further proofs, however, of what Pelagianism is, drawn from the writings of its own defender, remain to be considered.

There is, in the fourth volume of Jerom's works, which indeed consists of tracts by various authors, an explanation of a creed, inscribed to Damasus, which, by its agreement with divers citations from it by Augustine, in the most exact manner, appears to belong to Pelagius, and it is worthy of his subtilty. He mentions the common articles of faith, and anathematizes various heresies, which all the

* Jans. B. 1.

† Since I wrote the above, I have seen the Benedictine edition of Augustine's works, and find these Pelagian Notes in the last volume, which the editors, without hesitation, ascribe to Pelagius.

church condemns ; and, among the rest, “ the blasphemy of those, who say, that any thing impossible is commanded to man by God. We so confess free-will, that we say we always need the assistance of God, and those are equally in error, who say that man cannot sin, with those who say he cannot avoid sin. For both take away the liberty of the will. But we say, that man always can sin and not sin, that we may confess we are always free in our wills. This is the faith, blessed father, (Damasus, of Rome) which we have learned in the Catholic church, which we have always held and do hold. In which, if there is any position less skilful and less cautious, we desire to be corrected by you.” The fault of the creed is certainly not want of caution, but the excess of it. Under the specious term of freedom of will, in which natural* and moral inability are confounded, as if they were the same thing, he undermined the essential doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit, though in a very covert manner ; and asserted with an audacity almost unparalleled, that he had learned his creed in the Catholic church, which had at all times hitherto expressly owned the doctrines of grace and the fall of man, while he himself appears not to have believed either the one or the other, and was labouring with all his might to eradicate both from the Christian world.

But let the reader judge for himself what the real sentiments of this ambiguous politician were, from a work undoubtedly his, by his own confession†. I mean the letter to Demetrias, and which is falsely ascribed to Jerom. As it is much too long to quote, I shall select such parts as tend most decisively to show the real religious opinions of this heresiarch, which have been much misrepresented in our times.

“ TO DEMETRIAS, a Virgin ;

If, in dependance on the greatest genius and

* Jans. B. 1. vii.

† Jerom's 4th, tom. V.

equal knowledge, I should think myself capable of writing, yet I could not enter on so arduous a task without great fear. However, I must write to Demetrias, a virgin of Christ, noble and rich, and what is greater than these, one who tramples on nobility and riches by the ardour of faith—who, sprung from the noblest family, and brought up in the greatest wealth and delicacies, hath suddenly broke from the most tenacious blandishments of life, who hath cut down the flower of youth by the sword of faith, that is, by her will. But it is difficult to treat with such a character, in which there is so great a desire of learning, and so great ardour for perfection, that any doctrine, however perfect, can scarcely equal her merit. We write at the entreaty of her holy mother. As often as I have to speak of the plan of a holy life, I use first to show the powers of human nature, and what it really can do, and thence to encourage the mind of the hearer to press after virtue, lest it should be of no service to call men to that which they have presumed to be impossible. For hope is the spring and source of all activity in the road of virtue. If persons despair, their efforts flag entirely. The resources of nature are therefore to be declared, that men may press toward the mark of perfection, lest, while men are unconscious of their inherent powers, they think they have not what they really have. Let this be the foundation of a spiritual life, that the virgin may know her own strength which she may then exercise well, when she has learned that she has it. First then, measure the goodness of human nature from its Author, who, when he made all things very good, must have made man perfectly so. Let man learn to know the dignity of his nature, when he sees strong animals placed in subjection to him. God would have him to be a volunteer, not a slave, and therefore he left him in the hand of his own counsel. Take care

you stumble not on the rock of the ignorant vulgar; and do not think that man was created evil, because he can do evil. In the freedom of the will all the honour and dignity of nature consist; and from the same principle originates the praise of every good man. There would be no virtue in man, if he could not pass to evil. Man could not practise goodness spontaneously, were it not equally in his power to do evil. But most persons impiously, no less than ignorantly, find fault as it were with the divine workmanship. The goodness of nature is so apparent, that it shows itself even among Gentiles. How many virtuous philosophers have we read and heard of! whence their goodness, were not nature good? How much more virtuous may Christians be, who have Christ's instructions, and the assistance of divine grace*."

He goes on to speak of the virtues of Abel, Enoch, Melchizedec, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job, and describes them as all derived from the natural powers of man, "that you may understand, how great is the goodness of nature." He proceeds to deny the apostacy and depravity of nature in the fullest manner, asserting, "that the only cause which makes it difficult to do well, is the force of bad habit." "Now, if before the law, and long before the coming of our Saviour Christ, men led holy lives, how much more after his coming are they able to do it." He speaks of the grace of Christ, expiation by his blood, and encouragement derived from his example; but he only just mentions these things, without insisting on them. "Why do we loiter and blame the infirmity of nature? He would

* Augustine teaches us what Pelagius means by grace, as we shall see elsewhere. Certain it is, that he never allows it to mean the operation of sanctifying influences. The whole current of the letter before us, denying the evil nature of man as a lapsed creature, and asserting the sufficiency of man in his own powers, is opposed to such a sentiment.

W.

Augustine and his friend Alypius being both at Hippo, received a letter from Juliana, the mother of Demetrias, who acknowledged the receipt of their letter, warning against heresies. She thanks them for the admonition, but appears to insinuate that it was unnecessary to her family, which had never been infected with any heresy. She seems

...“Your words oblige us not to be silent concerning those who labour to corrupt what is sound; nor is it a small error, for men to think they have in themselves whatever is obtained of righteousness and piety; and that God helps us no further, than by the light of revelation; and that nature and doctrine are the only grace of God. To have a good will, and to have love, the queen of virtues, they say our own arbitration suffices. But what says the Apostle? THE LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY GHOST, WHICH IS GIVEN TO US, that no man may think he has it from himself. I find in the same letter of Pelagius, to Demetrias these words†: ‘You have therefore something on account of which you may be preferred to others, for nobility and opulence are rather of your family than of you; but spiritual riches

* Id. 12.

† They are the very same in the foregoing letter; but I omitted to quote the part.

none can confer on you, but yourself. In these you are justly to be praised, in these deservedly to be preferred to others, which cannot be but from yourself and in yourself*.' True it is, they must be in you ; but to say they are from you, is poison. Far be the virgin of Christ from hearing these things, who piously knows the poverty of the human heart, and therefore knows not how to be adorned but with the gifts of her spouse. Let her rather hear the Apostle : I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ; but I fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve, &c. †. In every thing give thanks. Ye do so, because ye have it not of yourselves. For who hath distinguished you from Adam, the mass of death and perdition? Was it not he who came to seek and save the lost? When the Apostle says, who made thee to differ? does he answer, my good will, my faith, my righteousness? does he not say, what hast thou that thou hast not received? We hope, considering the humility in which Demetrias was educated, that when she read the words which I quoted from the letter, if she have read them, she sighed, smote her breast, and perhaps wept, and prayed, that as these were not her words, so neither might they be her creed, that she might glory, not in herself, but in the Lord. We well know how sound you are in the doctrine of the Trinity, but there are evils of another kind than those which affect that article of the Christian faith, evils which injure the glory of the whole Trinity. If you narrowly observe, though the writer speaks of grace, he does it with guarded ambiguity; it may mean nature, or doctrine, or

* Pelagius followed the maxims of philosophers, not of the Scriptures. Horace says, æquum mī animum ipse parabo. But I might quote passages without end from the classic authors to the same purpose, whom numbers called Christian since the time of Pelagius have followed. What is this but to call Paganism Christianity?

† 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.

forgiveness of sins, or the example of Christ. But find, if you can, one word that owns a positive influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind actually imparting the power of loving God : gladly would we see such a confession in some much-admired writers ; but as yet we could never discover it."

From these two Epistles the state of the Pelagian controversy appears. The heretic, though little inclined to regard grace in any sense, did not deny that forgiveness of sins might be granted ; but as he denied the corruption of nature, he could never think sin to be so sinful as the word of God describes it. He dwelt on the grace of Scripture revelation, and the example of Christ ; but he loved to expatiate most freely on the powers of nature itself. But grace, as it means the gift of the Holy Spirit, renewing and sanctifying the will, he denied altogether. Augustine defended this as an essential of godliness, and therefore it appears always prominent on the face of the Pelagian controversy. It was a point of the utmost consequence ; for it draws along with it all the other essential doctrines.

Another
letter to
Demetrias.

In the works of Ambrose* we have another letter, under the name of Ambrose, addressed to the same virgin Demetrias : it seems written in the latter times of the controversy, and could not therefore be a letter of Ambrose. Probably it was written by the anonymous author of the treatise on the Calling of the Gentiles. Certainly it resembles his manner both in style and sentiment ; and a few quotations from it will deserve to be inserted here. He appears to have seen, in perfect harmony with Augustine, that the real stress of the controversy lay, not in a speculative set of doctrines, but in the solid provision made for humility. The doctrine of efficacious grace provides for this, Pelagianism excludes it. And on this single point the whole merit of the controversy may safely be made to depend.

* Ep. lxxxiv. p. 185.

“ There must, he observes, be an uniting grace, which confederates and harmonizes the multifold unity of the saints and their beautiful variety. This grace is true humility. In various duties there are various degrees of virtue : but in genuine humility every thing is solid and indivisible, and therefore it makes all its subjects to be one, because it admits of no inequality. The peculiarity then of this grace lies in the confession of the grace of God, which is wholly rejected, unless it be wholly received.—That man ejects himself out of grace, who distrusts its fulness, as if man needed the help of God in one part, and did not need it in another part of his actions ; as if any moment could be assigned, in which it would not be ruinous to him to be deprived of the Holy Spirit. He, indeed, in the essence of the Deity, is every where, and all-comprehensive ; but is conceived in a certain manner to recede from those, whom he ceases to govern. And the cessation of his aid is to be conceived as his absence, which that man madly thinks to be useful to himself, who rejoices in his good actions, and thinks that he rather than God hath wrought them. The grace of God must therefore be owned in the fullest and most unqualified sense ; the first office of which is, that his help be felt *. We have not received, says the Apostle, the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God ; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Whence, if any man think that he has any good things of which God is not the author, but himself, he has not the Spirit of God, but of the world, and swells with that secular wisdom, of which it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.—Amidst all the evils of men, to glory in our own intellects, instead of divine illumination, in knowing God, and to be elated in ourselves at the expense of the divine glory, is most dangerous. To desire to be preferred before all, is

* 1 Cor. ii.

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mischievous; much more so to take a man's hope from the Lord, and fix it on himself. Is not this to fulfil that Scripture, 'Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.*' It is the very sin of the devil, which ejected him from heaven. And he drew our first parents into the same, causing them to rest in the liberty of their own will. Men more easily guard against this pride in evil things; in virtues it is most studiously to be repelled, because he to whom praise seems due, is speciously ensnared by the temptation. Satan, in this respect, has his eye peculiarly on the active, the sober, the chaste, and the virtuous; he would ruin them by the pride of self-sufficiency. Innumerable souls, and the churches in general, have withstood the infection of the new doctrine; but some souls have imbibed the poison. Hence the insidious commendation of human nature, and the defence of its original rectitude as ever preserved unblemished. Hence Adam's sin has been asserted to be noxious only by example; hence in fact the abolition of infant baptism; hence the unsound confession of grace, as bestowed according to merit; hence the perfidy of owning, among us, the wounds of original sin, and of declaring, among their own partisans, that Adam hurt us only by example. But while the Lord Jesus says, the whole need not a physician, but the sick, they, though silent, cry aloud in pride, We are whole, we need not a physician. Consider what is done in regeneration, not looking only at the external sign, but also at the inward grace. Are not vessels of wrath changed into vessels of mercy? and men born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God? Says not Christ, without me ye can do nothing? Does any man say, that he abides in Christ, who doubts of Christ's working in him? After quoting a number of very

* Jerem. xvii.

Scriptures, he goes on: "Every godly motion of the illuminated mind is not to be separated from the human will, because man does nothing right, except what he does willingly; but a right motion of mind is the effect of the inspiration of the divine will. Other sins mar only the virtues to which they stand opposed; this of self-righteousness, while it assumes all, mars every thing. The image of God is genuine, when it is adorned with no other ornaments than what are received from the Heavenly Husband.—Humility and charity are kindred virtues, inseparably connected, inasmuch, that what St. Paul asserts of the latter*, may safely be predicated of the former."

The whole epistle is excellent, and a treasure of evangelical doctrine. But let us proceed to other monuments of antiquity.

The letter of the African council †, in which Aurelius, of Carthage, presided, and which was addressed to Innocent, of Rome, contains the following sentiments: "They (the Pelagians) attempt, by their praises of free-will, to leave no room for the grace of God, by which we are Christians, the Lord saying, if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. They assert, that the grace of God consists in this, that he hath so created the nature of man, that by his own will he can fulfil the law of God. The law itself too they reckon to belong to grace, because God hath given it for a help to men. But the real grace of God, by which a man is caused to delight in the law after the inward man, they will not acknowledge, though they dare not openly oppose it. Yet, what else do they in effect, while they teach, that human nature is alone sufficient to enable men to obey the law? Not attending to the Scripture, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy! And, we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any

A letter from the African Council.

* 1 Cor. xiii.

† Ep. 90.

thing as of ourselves.' We beseech you to observe the necessary consequence of such opinions, namely, that we have no occasion, on their plan, to pray, that we enter not into temptation : nor had our Lord occasion to say to Peter, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. He might have contented himself with exhorting or commanding him to keep his faith. And, instead of saying to his disciples, watch and pray, it would have sufficed to say, watch. When St. Paul prays, that the Ephesians might be strengthened with might in the inner man by his Spirit, they, in consistency with their plan, might have said, they might be strengthened with might, by the ability of nature received in our creation. It follows too, that infants need not to be baptized at all, as being perfectly innocent, and needing no redemption."

Innocent* agreed with the ideas of the council in his reply. We have next in order the letter of the Milevitanian council to the same Innocent †, in which Pelagianism is opposed in a similar manner, and a good use is made of the contrast between the first and second Adam, in the fifth chapter to the Romans. And from these and many other testimonies, it is evident that the great instrument by which Pelagius deceived men was, that he used the word grace in a sense which certainly is not scriptural. With him, whatever is the gift of God, is called grace ; so that a man, who, by the use of his natural powers, in conjunction with the aid of the revealed will of God, should expect to please God, might be said to seek to be saved by grace ; though it is certain, that the term in the New Testament is restrained to spiritual blessings.

A letter of
Augustine
to Innocent.

Augustine, in conjunction with a few other bishops, wrote again to Innocent ‡. "Without doubt, says he, the grace by which we are saved, is not that with which we are created. For if those

* 91.

† 92.

‡ 95.

bishops* who acquitted Pelagius, had understood that he called that grace, which we have in common with the wicked, and that he denied that which we have as Christians and sons of God, he would have appeared intolerable. I blame not then his judges, who understood the word grace in its common acceptation. Pelagius alone is not now our object; perhaps he is corrected; (I wish it may be the case;) but many souls are in danger of being beguiled. Let him be sent for to Rome, and asked what he means precisely by the term grace; or let him explain himself by letter; and if he be found to speak in the same manner as the church of Christ, let us rejoice in him. For whether he calls grace free-will, or remission of sins, or the precept of the law, he explains not that grace of the Holy Spirit, which conquers lusts and temptations, and which He who ascended into heaven has poured on us abundantly. He who prays, 'lead us not into temptation,' does not pray, that he may be a man, that he may have free-will, nor for the remission of sins, the subject of the former petition, nor that he may receive a command. Prayer itself then is a testimony of GRACE; and we shall rejoice that he is right, or corrected. Law and grace are to be distinguished: the law commands, grace bestows. If you will look into the book of Pelagius, given us by Timasius and Jacob †, and take the trouble to examine the places, which we have marked, you will find, that to the objection made to him, that he denied the grace of God, he replies, that this grace was the nature in which God created us. If he disown the book, or those passages, we contend not, let him anathematize them, and confess in plain words the grace which Christian doctrine teaches, which is not nature, but nature saved; not by external doctrine, but by the supply of the Spirit and secret mercy. For though natural gifts may be

* He means the Synod at Lydda.

† 96.

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called grace, yet that grace, by which we are predestinated, called, justified, glorified, is quite a different thing. It is of this the Apostle speaks, when he says, if by grace, then it is no more of works. And to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. For if Christ had not died for our sins, Pelagius's possibility of nature, which he makes to be grace, would have been just the same.

But I must quote no more of this excellent epistle, in which the very hinge, on which the controversy turned, is explained, and which affords an easy key to solve all the perplexities and ambiguities, with which the opposers of grace, ancient or modern, so much darken the subject.

Innocent agrees with Augustine, but writes not like a master of the subject. Indeed his importance in the controversy was rather founded on his local situation, than on any great character either of learning or piety.

Letters to
Sixtus
Augustine

In his letters to Sixtus, the Roman presbyter, Augustine answers Pelagian objections. "They think that God is by this means made a respecter of persons. They do not consider, that due punishment is inflicted on the condemned, not due grace bestowed on the acquitted. But it is unjust, they say, that one be acquitted, the other punished in the same cause. Truly, it is just that both be punished. Who can deny it?" He goes on to quote Rom. ix. — "But why the Lord frees this man rather than that, let him examine, who can fathom the depth of divine judgment; but let him BEWARE OF THE PRECIPICE. In the mean time, to him, who lives as yet by faith, and sees but in part, it is enough to know or believe, that God frees none but by gratuitous mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he condemns none but with the strictest truth by the same our Lord Jesus Christ."

On the
subject

Vitalis, of Carthage, though not a Pelagian by profession, taught that men were indebted to their own free will for their conversion to God, and not to the operations of divine grace. Augustine * undertakes to convince him of his error, by pressing upon his conscience the duty, confessed by Christians to be binding on all men who professed Christianity, namely, to pray for their fellow-creatures; for infidels, that they might believe; for catechumens, that God would inspire them with a desire for regeneration; and for the faithful, that they may persevere. He shows, that the necessary consequence of Vitalis's sentiments was, that the pastors should content themselves with preaching the doctrine to men, without praying for them, as he confined his idea of divine grace to the exhibition of the doctrine to mankind. He presses this argument on the conscience of Vitalis, by giving repeated scriptural proof of the duty of praying for all sorts of men, which would be rendered altogether nugatory by the Pelagian sentiments.

The letter to Anastasius breathes an evangelical spirit of charity, distinguishes that Christian grace from the spirit of slavish fear, and in no mean degree leads the humbled soul from the Law to the Gospel, opposing, toward the close, the Pelagian pride, which, teaching man to trust in himself, mars the whole design of Christianity. The whole is so excellent, that I am tempted to transcribe; but brevity must be studied, and it will be no contemptible fruit of my labour, if young theological students be incited to read such a Divine as Augustine for themselves.

OF 2151141
Letter to
Anastasius.

In a small epistolary treatise concerning the Baptism of Infants †, he argues from the confessed antiquity and propriety of their baptism, admitted by Pelagians themselves, to the proof of the doctrine

On Baptism
of Infants.

* 107. † Ep. 144.

‡ Ep. 16, of the Appendix to the Epist. Paris Edit.

of original sin, and, toward the close, he thus rebukes the pretensions to perfection made by those heretics: "As to their affirming, that some men have lived or do live without sin, it were to be wished it were so; it is to be endeavoured, that it may be so; it is to be prayed, that it may be so; nor yet is it to be trusted that it is so. For to those, who wish and strive and pray with just supplication, whatever remains of sin is daily remitted through this their cordial prayer, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Whoever asserts that this prayer is in this life unnecessary to any the most holy persons, (I except the MOST HOLY ONE alone,) he greatly mistakes, and pays a compliment, I am persuaded, very unacceptable to him whom he commends. If he think himself to be such a one, 'he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him,' for no other reason but that he thinks falsely. The Physician, who is not needful for the whole, but for the sick, knows in his method of cure how to perfect us for eternal salvation, who does not even take away death, the wages of sin, from those whose sins he yet forgives, that even in their struggles to overcome the fear of it, they might undertake a contest for the sincerity of faith: and in some things he does not assist even his righteous ones to perfect righteousness, lest they should be lifted up; that so, while no man living is justified in his sight, we might be indebted constantly to him for forgiveness, and thank him for the same; and thus by holy humility be healed and recovered from that first cause of all vices, THE SWELLING OF PRIDE."

Three books
to Marcellinus.

I may not dwell much on the larger treatises. The three books to Marcellinus against the Pelagians are the works of a master. In them he solidly confutes the idea of sinless perfection, and in answering their arguments, shows the nature of the controversy at that time. He defends the doctrine of original sin, and the custom of baptizing infants,

and evinces the novelty of the Pelagian notion of man's original innocence since the fall *.

CENT.

V.

On Nature
and Grace.

In his book of Nature and Grace he argues in much the same manner, and opposes a Pelagian writer, who extolled nature, and who found fault with those who charged their sin on the weakness of the human powers. In this treatise he observes, that Pelagianism appears to him to make a man forget why he is a Christian †. His two books ‡, written expressly against Pelagius, contain a shrewd answer to a shrewd adversary. Augustine's inaccurate notion of the term justification, confounding it with sanctification, appears very plainly in this treatise §, of which more hereafter. In the same treatise appears also Pelagius's false notion of grace, as consisting in external revelation only. The heretic's idea of "power" from God, and of "will" from man, mentioned in the beginning of this treatise, is remarkably descriptive of his sentiments. Augustine's tract of Predestination and Grace is agreeable to his other works ||. In the same volume are the epistles of Prosper and Hilary, concerning Semi-Pelagianism in Gaul. Their coincidence in sentiment with Augustine is apparent, and the rise of this heresy and its views are by them illustrated.

His observations on the good of perseverance shows us his notion of this grace, which seems, however, different from the account in the sixth and tenth chapters of St. John.

On Perse-
verance.

Satan ever inclines men to extremes; and there were not wanting those, who, owning the doctrine of grace so strenuously preached by Augustine, began to think it wrong or absurd to rebuke men for sin. "If I act wrong, I am not to be blamed, but God is to be prayed to, to give me what he has not given me. It would be right to blame me, if, through my own fault, I were debarred of the power of doing good."

* Aug. opera. tom. vi. † Tom. vi. ‡ Id. § p. 166. || Id.

To answer these objections, and to show the consistency of the doctrines of grace with the use of means, exhortations, and endeavours, Augustinus wrote his little tract of "Rebuke and Grace." He cannot be said to have done full justice to the subject; it required an accurate course of argumentation. But the little which he says is sufficient for serious and humble minds. The proud and the careless alone are overcome by such perversions as these which occasioned the tract. "O man, imprecpts and commands, know what thou oughtest to possess; in rebukes, know thou art disobedient through thy own fault, in prayer, know whence thou mayest receive what thou desirest."

"Thou art to be rebuked, because thou art not willing to be rebuked. Thou wouldst not have thy vices to be shown thee; thou wouldst not have them smitten, nor have the wholesome pain, that thou mightest seek the physician."

"This is the utility of rebuke, which is used salubriously, sometimes in a greater, sometimes in a less degree, according to the diversity of sins, and is then wholesome, when the supreme Physician pleases." He shows that original sin in itself deserves rebuke, that from the pain of rebuke the regenerated will may arise, if the person rebuked be a son of promise, "that while the rod of correction sounds outwardly, God within may work to will and to do by secret inspiration."

He shows the difference between the state of Adam, when perfect, and that of the best Christians while on earth. "They, though far less comfortable than he, because of the manifold conflict of the new and the old man, are nevertheless supplied with much stronger grace, even that of God made man, to emancipate them from their evils."

Tom. vi.

See the subject fully, and as appears unanswerably considered, in Edwards's Free-will.

Jerom's writings against Pelagianism should now be considered. But of them it will suffice to say that he is no less than Augustine determined in his opposition to the heresy. His doctrine of grace is sound, and an humility of spirit highly adapted indeed to the subject, but very contrary to the natural temper of that choleric writer, appears. One short sentence deserves to be immortalized. *Hæc homines soli perfecta, si imperfectos se esse novimus.* ("This is the only perfection of men, to know themselves imperfect.")

CHAP. V.

A SHORT VIEW OF AUGUSTINE'S CITY OF GOD.

The subject of this great work is so much of a piece with the history before us, the work itself is so remarkable a monument of genius, learning, and piety united, and deserves so well both of the classical scholar, and the theologian, that the reader will either expect some account of it, or at least excuse me, if I attempt it. Ecclesiastical antiquity has been too much depreciated in our times, and students in divinity have been discouraged from the study of the Fathers. In truth, a selection of them ought to be made, to praise or dispraise the primitive writers in general is obviously absurd. But Augustine's City of God deserves an unqualified commendation. The young student who shall meditate on it with deep attention, will find it richly to repay his labour; and the following review of its plan and contents may teach him what he is to expect from it.

Augustine's
City of
God.

The capture of Rome by Alaric the Goth, and the subsequent plunder and miseries of the imperial city, had opened the mouths of the Pagans to blas-

* Jerom's works, vol. i. 91, P. 66.

pheme the true God, and to accuse Christianity as the cause of the declension of the empire. However trifling such an argument may now appear, at that time it had so great weight, that it gave occasion to Augustine, IN HIS ZEAL FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD, to write this treatise.

The work itself consists of twenty-two books. The first states the objections made by the Pagans, and answers them in form. It was a remarkable fact, that all who fled to the church called the Basilicæ of the Apostles, whether Christians or not, were preserved from military fury. The author takes notice of this singular circumstance, as a proof of the great authority of the name and doctrine of Christ, even among Pagans, and shows that no instance can be found in their history, where many vanquished people were spared out of respect to their religious worship. He justly observes, therefore, that the evils accompanying the late disaster ought to be ascribed to the usual events of war, the benefits to the power of the name of Christ. His thoughts on the promiscuous distribution of good and evil in this life are uncommonly excellent. “ If all sin, he observes were now punished, nothing might seem to be reserved to the last judgment. If the Divinity punished no sin openly now, his providence might be denied. In like manner, in prosperous things, if some petitions for temporal things were not abundantly answered, it might be said that they were not at God’s disposal. If all petitions were granted, it might be thought that we should serve God only for the sake of worldly things.” And in a number of elegant allusions he goes on to show the benefit of afflictions to the righteous, and the curse which accompanies them to the wicked*. He mentions also the propriety of punishing the godly often in this life, because they

* *Pari motu exagitatum & exhalat horribiliter cœnum, & suaviter fragrat unguentum, &c.* It is a just recommendation

are not sufficiently weaned from the world, and because they do not rebuke the sins of the world as they ought, but conform too much to the taste of ungodly men. He answers the objections drawn from their sufferings in the late disaster. "Many Christians, say they, are led captive. It would be very miserable, he owns, if they could be led to any place, where they could not find their God." In the same book he excellently handles the subject of suicide, demonstrates its cowardice, and exposes the pusillanimity of Cato. He mentions the prayer of Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who had reduced himself to poverty for the sake of Christ, when the Barbarians laid waste his city, "Lord, suffer me not to be tormented on account of gold and silver; for where all my wealth is thou knowest." For there he had his all, where the Lord hath directed us to lay up our treasure, and he strongly insists, as the fullest answer to objections, that the saint loses nothing by all his afflictions.

Having sufficiently spoken to the particular occasion, he proceeds, in the second book, to wage OFFENSIVE WAR WITH THE PAGANS, and shows that while their religion prevailed, it never promoted the real benefit of men. In this book he proves his point with respect to moral evils. Immoral practices were not discouraged or prohibited in the least by the popular idolatry, but, on the contrary, vice and flagitiousness were encouraged. He triumphs in the peculiar excellence of Christian institutes, because by them instruction was constantly diffused among the body of the people, of which the whole system of Pagan-worship was void. His observations on Stage-plays*, and on the vicious manners of the Romans, even in the best times of their re-
of this treatise, that its Latinity is of a superior taste to that of his other works, which were written to the populace; this was meant for the perusal of philosophers.

Book 2d.

* By Roman laws, players could not be admitted into Roman citizenship.

public, as confessed by Sallust, or at least deduced by fair inference from his writings, are extremely worthy of attention. I have not seen a more just estimate any where of Roman virtue, than is to be found in this and some of the following books. The classical reader will do well to attend to his remarks, after he has made himself master of the historical facts. And, it is only one instance among many of the unhappy propensity of the age to infidelity, that the specious sophisms of Montesquieu concerning the virtue of the Roman republic, are so much sought after and held in such veneration, while the solid arguments of Augustine are scarcely known among us. He eloquently describes what sort of felicity a carnal heart would desire, and in the description, shows the unreasonableness of its wishes. In the same book will be found some valuable remains of Cicero de Republica, a most profound and ingenious treatise, of which a few fragments are preserved by Augustine, and which are introduced by him, to show, that, by Cicero's confession, the Roman state was completely ruined before the times of Christianity. The book concludes with a pathetic exhortation to unbelievers.

Book 3d.

In the third book, he demonstrates that the Pagans had no more help from their religion against natural evils, than they had against moral. He recounts the numberless miseries endured by the Romans long before the coming of Christ, such as would by malice have been imputed to the Christian religion had it then existed, some of which were more calamitous than any thing which they had lately sustained from the Goths.

Book 4th.

In the fourth book, he demonstrates that the Roman felicity, such as it was, was not caused by their religion. Here he weighs the nature of that glory and extent of empire with which the carnal heart is so much captivated, and demonstrates in the most solid manner, that a large extended em-

give us no more an evidence of felicity, a building
 whose property is in private life; and whoever has
 been fascinated by political writers, ancient or mo-
 dern, into an admiration of this false glory, may see
 it excellently combated by the reasoning of August-
 in. The Pantheistic philosophy, of which the
 old sages are full, is ridiculed, and the futility of
 all the popular religions exposed. In the conclu-
 sion he gives a short view of the dispensations of
 Providence toward the Jews, and shows the super-
 iority of their felicity, so long as they were obedient,
 to that of the Romans, not done in blood but in
 good. In the fifth book, he describes the virtues of the
 old Romans, and what reward was given to it here
 on earth—shadowy reward for shadowy virtues. He
 gives an excellent account of the vice of vain glory,
 and contrasts it with the humility of Christians.
 He demonstrates that it was the true God (who dis-
 penses his mercies and judgments toward the Ro-
 mans. A more striking view, of the emptiness of
 warlike grandeur cannot be found, than in the ac-
 count which he gives of the condition of the victors
 and the vanquished, and in the demonstration that
 the latter were no way inferior to the former in point
 of real happiness, except in the crisis of battle.
 In the same book, he argues against Cicero, and
 shows the consistency of the prescience of God with
 the free agency of man. In this and some other
 parts of his works, the discerning reader may see
 some traces of that ingenious work, Jonathan Ed-
 wards's Enquiry on Free-will. He takes notice of
 the total defeat sustained by Rhadagases, the bar-
 barous Pagan in Italy, and reminds the Gentiles
 how insublingly they had declared beforehand, that
 he would certainly be victorious. His observations
 on the ill success of the pious emperor Gratian,
 and the prosperity of Constantine and Theodosius,
 deserve also our attention. In the first five books, that Ed-

Book 5th.

.pg 207

.pg 207

Five follow-
ing books.

ganism could do nothing for men in temporal things, in the five following books he proves, that it was also totally insignificant with respect to the next life*. Here we meet with some valuable fragments of the very learned Varro, who divides religion into three kinds, the fabulous, the philosophical, and the political. Here too we have a clear and historical detail of the opinions of the ancient philosophers†.

Of the remaining books the four first describe the beginning, the four middle the progress, and the four last the issues of the two states, namely, the city of God and the World; the history of both, and the different genius and spirit of each, are throughout conceived with great energy by the author, and are illustrated with copiousness and perspicuity.

Book 11th.

The eleventh book begins with a just and solid view of the knowledge of God by the Mediator, and the authority of the Scriptures. A number of questions, which respect the beginnings of things, rather curious than important, follow. Among these there is, in the twelfth chapter, an occasional comparison of the felicity of the just in this life with that of Adam before his fall, which deserves a better character. His metaphysics concerning the origin of evil are interspersed. But the greater part of the book may be omitted with little loss to the reader. Yet his censure of Origen in the twenty-third chapter deserves attention.

Origen
censured.

Book 12th.

In the twelfth book the question concerning the origin of evil is still more explicitly stated; and the opinions of those who pretend to account for the origin of the world in a manner different from the Scriptures, and to give it an antiquity much superior to that which is assigned to it in them, are refuted.

Book 13th.

The thirteenth book describes the fall of man; but

* Book vi.

† Book viii.

questions of little or no moment are interspersed; and the subtilty of the learning of his times meeting with his argumentative mind, leads him here, as in various other parts of his writings, into trifling disquisitions. I do not, however, reckon of this sort his account of the difference between an animal and spiritual body, because it throws some good light on the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians.

The fourteenth book contains matter more interesting than the foregoing three, though it is not without unimportant speculations. A just idea of the magnitude of the first sin is given, and the justice of God is excellently vindicated. In the close of this book he contrasts the two states in a very graphical manner. "Two sets of affections have produced two states: self-love produced an earthly one to the contempt of God; the love of God produced a heavenly one to the contempt of man. That glories in man, this in the Lord. That seeks glory from men, to this, God, the witness of the conscience is the greatest glory. That exalts the head in its own glory, this says to its God, THOU ART MY GLORY, AND THE LIFTER UP OF MY HEAD. In that the lust of power reigns, in this men serve one another in love, governors in providing, subjects in obeying. That loves its own strength, this says to its God, I will LOVE THEE, O LORD, MY STRENGTH. In that, wise men live according to man, and pursue the goods of body or mind, or both, or if they know God, honour him not as God, nor are thankful. In this, human wisdom is of no account, godliness is all, in which the true God is worshipped, and the reward is expected, in the society of saints and angels, that God may be all in all."

In the fifteenth book, he enters upon the second part of the history of the two states, namely, their progress. He describes very justly the two types,

Sarah and Agar, and illustrates the spirit and genius of the two sects by the cases of Cain and Abel. He confutes those who would make the lives of the Antediluvians of shorter duration than that assigned them in Scripture. His reflections on the Ark and the Deluge are just, though to us they contain little that is new; and in the last chapter he shows that the literal and allegorical sense of Scripture ought both to be supported, without depreciating either.

Book 16th.

The sixteenth book carries on the history of the city of God from Noah to David, and contains important instruction throughout, especially to those who have not read the same things in modern authors.

Book 17th.

The seventeenth book may be called the prophetic history. He shows a double sense must necessarily be affixed to the words of the prophets, in which sometimes the literal, sometimes the spiritual, and sometimes both senses are applicable. He justly observes, therefore, that the Scriptures are to be understood in a tripartite sense. And he gives an admirable instance of his views in Hannah's song in the first book of Samuel, in which a king is prophesied of, at a time when no king was in Israel. His comments on the Psalms are excellent also to the same purpose. These views are so remote from the usual mode of reasoning in our times, that they will not easily find credit in the world. But I will venture to affirm, that the more men study the Scriptures, the more they will see the justness of Augustine's remarks, and the necessity of admitting them.

Book 18th.

In the eighteenth book he displays much learning in describing the times of the world coeval with those of the church of God, prior to the birth of Christ. He proves the superior antiquity of prophetic authority to that of any philosophers. The remarkable harmony of the sacred writers, in the

promotion of one system, and the endless discordancies of philosophers, are ably contrasted. Yet he proves from the earliest times, that the citizens of the new Jerusalem were not confined absolutely to Jewry.

In speaking of the times of Christ and the propagation of the Gospel, he observes*, “ In this malignant world, in these evil days, whilst the church is procuring future dignity by present humility, and is disciplined by the incentives of fear, the torments of pain, the fatigue of labours, and the dangers of temptations, rejoicing only in hope, when her joy is sound, many reprobates are mixed with the good; both are collected into the Gospel-net, and both, included in this world as in a sea, swim promiscuously till they reach the shore, where the bad shall be severed from the good, and in the good, as in his temple, God shall be all in all.”—Christ chose disciples meanly born, obscure and illiterate, that whatever great things they should do, he might be in them, and do all. One he had among them, whose evil he turned to good, by making it an instrument of his passion, and affording an example to his church of enduring evil. His holy church being planted, so far as his bodily presence required, he suffered, died, rose again, showing by his passion what we ought to sustain for truth, by his resurrection what to hope for in eternity; and this is an additional lesson to the great mystery of redemption, by which his blood was shed for the remission of our sins. He proves that the faith of the Gospel is strengthened by the dissensions of heretics; and after some observations on Antichrist, as just as might be expected in his time, he concludes with a remark on a Pagan prophecy, which affirmed that the Christian religion would only continue three hundred and sixty-five years.. “ What may be doing, says he, at the end of this period in other parts of the

* Chap. xlix.

world, it may be needless to inquire. I will mention what I know; in the renowned city of Carthage, the imperial officers, in the year following the predicted extinction of Christianity, overturned the temples of the idols, and brake the images. And for the space of thirty years since that time, the falsity of the pagan divination being notorious, occasion hath been given to render the progress of the Gospel still more triumphant."

Book 19th.

The four last books describe the issues of the two states. The nineteenth deserves the studious attention of every scholar, who would accurately distinguish between theology and philosophy. He contrasts the ideas of happiness exhibited by both with great clearness, and, while he does justice to all the good that is found in secular systems, he points out their fundamental errors. The principles of evangelical virtue are stated; the miseries of life are described, and both the true relief against them which the Gospel proposes is exhibited, and the false consolations of philosophy are justly exposed. In fine (for my limits admit not a longer detail) the reader will find here the mass of secular philosophy reduced to order, its errors detected, and the very picture of the Christian state and genius delineated.

Book 20th.

The twentieth book undertakes to describe the last judgment. But as the vigorous and discursive genius of the author led him to handle a multitude of intricate questions, and to undertake the exposition of some of the most difficult prophecies in the Scripture, for which the early times in which he lived were unequal, through want of the evidence of their accomplishment, almost the whole is very uninteresting.

Former of
the two last
books.

In the two last books he gives his ideas of the punishment of the wicked, and of the happiness of the righteous in a future state. The former, though it has a mixture of curious questions, more

subtil than important, will from the eleventh chapter to the end deserve a careful perusal. I have not seen in so small a compass, a sounder answer to the objections of men against the Divine justice in punishing sin eternally, than is to be found in the eleventh and twelfth chapters. It appears that the Lord's Prayer was daily used by the church * in his time, and though he seems to give an unsound interpretation of our Lord's words, of making FRIENDS OF THE MAMMON OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, yet he confesses his interpretation would be dangerous in practice; and he protests against the ideas of those who imagine they can atone for their sins by alms. He refutes various presumptions of men who expect to escape the damnation of hell without a sound conversion.

In the last book, which describes the eternal rest of the city of God, he dwells a little on the external evidences of Christianity, and in speaking of miracles, he describes some which were wrought in his own time. One of them, the healing of a disorder, seems peculiarly striking, because it was in answer to prayer. I have again to regret the scholastic and subtil taste of his times interwoven with most important matter. The twenty-second chapter gives as striking a proof, drawn from facts, of human apostasy as I have seen. The reflections in the two next chapters are also admirable. And he closed with a delightful view of the eternal felicity of the church of God.

Last Book.

Should the very imperfect scetch I have given of this work, one of the greatest efforts of genius and learning in any age, induce any classical scholars to peruse it with candour and attention, and, by the blessing of God, to imbibe some portion of the heavenly spirit of the author, I shall have cause to rejoice. One caution I must however give in reading it, which, indeed, is generally necessary in reading the

* Chap. last.

CHAP.
V.

Fathers, and it is that which I would keep steadily in view throughout this history. We must forget our own times, spirit, taste, and manner. We must transplant ourselves into those of the author, and make allowances for his modes both of thinking and speaking, which are extremely different from our own. Without this reasonable degree of candour, to which, however, few minds are sufficiently inclined, it is impossible to make a just estimate of the works which pass under our examination.

CHAP. VI.

AUGUSTINE'S CONDUCT TOWARD THE
DONATISTS.CHAP.
VI.

THE active spirit of the bishop of Hippo found sufficient employment in his long course of private and public labours against the Pelagians, the Manichees, and the Donatists, besides the general care of the African churches, and the peculiar inspection of his own diocese. The two former sects he in a manner eradicated: his own experience in religion fitted him for the work. The last sect he opposed with much success. Vital godliness, it is true, is not so much interested in this opposition, nor does his conduct here merit in all respects that praise in regard to them, which it does in regard to the others.

Let us distinguish the Donatists as they ought to be. Some of them were, comparatively speaking, a mild and peaceable people; others, called the CIRCUMCELLIONES, were a mere banditti, sons of violence and bloodshed, who neither valued their own lives, nor those of their neighbours, and frequently were remarkable for committing suicide in a fit of frenzy. They had a peculiar malice against

the pastors of the general church, and way-laid them, from time to time, attacked them with armed force, and mutilated, or even killed them. They burnt the houses of those who would not comply with their sect, and were guilty of many detestable enormities. Augustine himself was several times way-laid by these miserable men, and once by a peculiar providence, through the mistake of his guide, was led into a different road from that by which he had intended to travel, when he was going through one of his usual visitations of his diocese, a work which he was wont to discharge with frequency and labour. He learnt afterwards, that by this means he had escaped an ambush which they had laid for him.

There was nothing peculiarly doctrinal in the whole scheme of the Donatists : they differed from the general church only concerning a matter of fact, namely, whether Cæcilian had been legally ordained. Augustine justly observes in his controversy with them, that, if their opponents had been mistaken, such a circumstance justified not at all their separation from the general church, since Jesus Christ, his grace and doctrine, remained the same. Yet for such a trifle, even from the close of the third century to this which is before us, did these schismatics think it worth while to rend the body of Christ, when the articles of belief were the same in both parties. So much had men forgotten to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace ! The peaceable Donatists abhorred the madness of the Circumcelliones, and yet had not the discernment to see and lament the evils which their own needless schism had occasioned. They themselves were crumbled into parties, and subdivided into little bodies which condemned one another, each arrogating to itself the title of the true church, while they all joined to condemn the general church. In the mean time they were extremely active in re-baptizing multitudes in Africa ; for the baptism of

the general church was not by them allowed to be valid.

Augustine owns, concerning one party of them, the Rogatians, that they carefully distinguished themselves from the Circumcelliones. Whether the rest did so, is not so evident. This may be safely affirmed, that all truly humble and godly persons of the Donatist name (and I hope there were many such in Africa) must have separated themselves from them entirely. But it was very difficult for others to make the just distinction : Africa was full of these schismatics, and the furious party were undoubtedly very numerous. Let us briefly state the methods used by Augustine with respect to this people.

At first, when he saw the vast numbers of them with which Africa swarmed, his heart was struck with horror at the thought of exposing them to the penal laws of the empire ; and he wrote to the Imperial court his sentiments and wishes, which were, that the lawless and savage conduct of the Circumcelliones might be restrained by the civil sword, but that no other arms should be used against the peaceable Donatists, than preaching and arguments ; because, as he observed, compulsive conversions were not genuine, and tended only to harden men in sin.

Other bishops of the general church in Africa were not so moderate : they desired that the civil restraints should be exercised on the whole Donatist name, and signified these sentiments to the Imperial court, at a time when their spirits were heated by the savage treatment of a certain bishop, who had fallen into the hands of the Circumcelliones, and was believed to have lost his life. Under the impression of this belief, on account of many enormities which had been practised by the banditti, the court issued orders for fines to be imposed on the Donatists, and banishment on their bishops. It was not till after these edicts were promulged, that it appeared, that the injured bishop had escaped with

life. Augustine owns that he afterwards retracted his opinion, when he saw the good effects of the interposition of the civil magistrate. Many of the Circumcelliones, he observes, with much humility and joy confessed their error, and returned into the bosom of the church: numbers too, who had never joined in their enormities, and who had nothing to plead for their schism but custom and tradition, and the shame of inconstancy, and the fear of molestation from the Circumcelliones, when they found themselves exposed to the laws for the defence of their schism, began to examine the grounds on which it stood, saw and confessed their error, and united themselves to the general church with every mark of serious repentance. Moved by these considerations, and convinced by the effects rather than the reason of the case, the bishop of Hippo repeatedly supported in his writings the justice and reasonableness of the imperial methods of opposing the Donatists.

It is certain, however, that he continued all the time extremely tender in his conscience concerning this subject. He repeatedly and earnestly pressed the magistrates on no account to shed blood, and in all his writings and conduct on this occasion demonstrated, that he was led by principle, by the fear of God, and by a charitable compassion for the souls of men, in his contentions with the Donatists. I know it is not easy for men to believe this, who are themselves profane and careless, and with whom all sorts of religion are of equal value, because they are apt to measure others by themselves. Yet, whoever shall take pains to weigh the writings of Augustine, and to compare them with his practice and general temper, will feel an invincible conviction, that I have not been betrayed into an excess of candour in forming this judgment. In truth, the case was mixed and complicated: one sort of conduct ought to have been held toward the furious,

another toward the peaceable. But it was difficult to distinguish in real fact, though none in our times will doubt, that Augustine's first sentiments were more just than his second. He largely insists on the unreasonableness of the Donatists in confining the mercies of salvation to themselves, as if all the world had been unchristian, and Africa alone were possessed of the truth. And he observed, that their absurdity appeared still stronger in confining salvation to some particular spots of Africa, when they had subdivided themselves into little parties, each pretending to monopolize the truth. But then the general church should not have imitated this bigotry, in condemning the whole body of the Donatists. Highly culpable as these were in breaking the unity of the church, the peaceable part of them, who feared God, and wrought righteousness, should have been owned as brethren by the general church, and the furious alone should have been rejected as unchristian, and exposed to the civil law for their crimes. It was an erroneous notion of the unity of the church, and the dread of schism on the one hand, which led Augustine into the mistake ; and it was an abuse of the right of conscience on the other, which seduced the Donatists*.

* It would be equally tedious and uninteresting to take notice of the endless perversions with which Mr. Gibbon has filled the history of the church. A remark or two may be made, to guard those who read his History against his deceptions. In reading him (chap. xxxiii. Vol. III. Decline and fall of the Roman Empire) I was surprised to meet with two representations, for neither of which I could find any foundation in original records, both relating to these Donatists. The first is, that he ascribes the madness, and tumult, and bloodshed, of the Circumcelliones to the imperial persecutions in Augustine's time. I will not say how far these outrages might be increased by them ; but the Donatists had ever been an unruly and turbulent sect. Their very origin was scandalous, and in Julian's time their furious conduct deserved the interference of the civil magistrate, Aug. ad. Donat. Ep. 105. Fleury, Vol. II. B. xv. C. 32. His second account is still more glaringly false. He ascribes the success of the Vandals in Africa to the effect of the same prosecution of the

The bishop of Calama, one of the disciples of Augustine, going to visit his diocese, was attacked by the Circumcelliones, robbed, and so ill-treated, that he escaped with difficulty. Upon this, Crispinus the Donatist bishop of Calama, was fined by the magistrate according to the laws. He denied himself to be a Donatist, and the two bishops of Calama appeared in court, and pleaded before a great multitude, nor did Augustine refuse his assistance to the church on this occasion. The Donatist was convicted, and required to pay the fine. But the disciple of Augustine, satisfied with his victory, begged that the fine might be remitted, which request was granted accordingly. The pride of the Donatist refused to stoop, and he appealed to the Emperor, who ordered the law to be executed with the greatest rigour on the whole party. The bishops of the general church, however, with Augustine at their head, implored for them the imperial clemency, and were successful in their petition.

No doubt it would have been far more agreeable to the maxims of Christianity, had no methods but those of argument been employed against the Donatists. But the difficulties of the case have been stated ; and the conduct of Augustine, and no doubt of other godly persons in Africa, was in general of a piece with the mild behaviour which they displayed on this occasion. Instances, however, of iniquitous and oppressive exactions from the peaceable Donatists would naturally take place, amidst the indignation of men's minds against the Circumcelliones. Nor is there any thing in all this which impeaches the acknowledged sincerity, meekness, and piety of the bishop of Hippo, notwithstanding the mistake of judgment, which happened to him in common Donatists, who, he supposes, joined the arms of Genseric against the general church. Of this no proof appears at all. He might as justly have ascribed the Pretender's invasion of Scotland, in the last rebellion, to the revival of godliness in Great Britain, which took place about the same time.

with the whole church at that time. It is a delicate and difficult matter to settle, in all cases, how far the civil magistrate ought to interfere in religion. Different ages are apt to run into different extremes, as either superstition or profaneness predominates. Doubtless there is a middle path of rectitude in this subject, which I have endeavoured to describe on a former occasion, though, to apply it with exactness to all cases and circumstances would be difficult in itself, and foreign to the design of this history. Donatism, however, under the charitable and argumentative labours of Augustine, received a blow, from which it never recovered, and the sect dwindled gradually into insignificance; and the most pleasing part of the story is, that by the suppression of the Circumcelliones, the Ecclesiastical face of Africa must have been abundantly meliorated, and, in all probability, a great accession made to the real church of Christ.*

CHAP. VII.

THE REST OF AUGUSTINE'S WORKS REVIEWED.

Tracts on
Lying.

THE two tracts on Lying, addressed to Consentius, demonstrate the soundness of the author's views in morality. Such indeed is the connexion between

* After examining Augustine's writings concerning the Donatists, particularly the letters 48, 50, 61, and 127, and the narrative of Possidonius, I have endeavoured to compress into this chapter the substance of the historical information which they contain, without troubling myself or the reader with particular citations. I have done on this occasion, what I profess to do generally, to the best of my ability, namely, formed my judgment on original evidences, and not on the opinions and reasonings of any modern whatever. Laborious task! compared with the ease of copying other historians; invidious also, because it often obliges one to correct modern representations! But it is the task of a real historian.

one part of divine truth and another, that those who have the justest and the largest views of Gospel-grace, have always the most exact and extensive ideas of moral duty, and what is more, exemplify them in life and conversation. For the same self-righteousness, which tarnishes the lustre of divine grace, always induces its votary to curtail the demands of the divine law, to adulterate it with pride and the love of the world, and to render a thousand things allowable in practice, which an humble and holy soul must abhor. We have seen what vague and dangerous notions of veracity had begun to prevail during the progress of superstition, from which even such men as Ambrose and Chrysostom were not exempt; and that what are called pious frauds had in some instances been esteemed laudable. Augustine in the treatise before us, defines lying to be "The saying of one thing and thinking of another;" and in all cases, even for the most pious and salutary purposes, he excludes lying as unchristian. The second chapter of the epistle to the Galatians had been perversely interpreted in that part of it which relates to the dissimulation of Peter*. He rescues the divine oracles from the abuse, and demonstrates from the most express and determinate decisions of the New Testament, that all deceit of the tongue is wicked. The task was worthy of him who was the principal instrument of the revival of godliness in the church †.

* Aug. opera, tom. iv. page 2. Paris edition, 1571.

† In this Chapter, the other works of Augustine, which have not fallen under our consideration in the preceding Chapters, are considered, so far as I think them worthy of the reader's particular attention. Those parts of his voluminous writings, which are either mere repetitions of what has been elsewhere illustrated, or seem not to convey any interesting instruction, or handle subjects which have been much better treated by those who have had the advantage of later improvements, are omitted. —The book of Meditations, though more known to English readers than any other of the works ascribed to Augustine, on account of the translation of it into our language by Stanhope, seems not to be his, both on account of its style, which is sen-

His treatise on faith and works was written to obviate the Antinomianism, which some were in his time desirous of introducing. Men, who still persevered in their sins, desired to be baptized ; and there were those who supported their unreasonable wishes, and thought it sufficient to teach them, after baptism, how they ought to live, still holding out a hope to their minds, that they might be saved as by fire, because they had been baptized, though they never repented of their sins. In answer to these dangerous abuses, our author shows, that the true saving faith works by love, that the instruction of catechumens includes morals, as well as doctrines ; that the labour of catechizing is exceedingly profitable to the church, and that persons ought to be catechized before they receive baptism, that they may know how vain it is to think of being eternally saved without holiness. He justly observes, that the eunuch's answer to Philip, " I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," virtually and radically involved in it, a knowledge of the true character of the person and offices of Christ, and of the qualities which belong to his members. He supports his doctrine by Scripture authority, particularly by that of St. James in his second chapter ; and against those who say, that they would believe in Christ and come to him, and are hindered, he observes, " We do not prohibit such as are willing, from coming to Christ, but we prove by their own practice that they are not willing to come to Christ ; nor do we forbid them to believe in Christ, but demonstrate that they are not tentious, concise, abrupt, and void of any of those classical elegancies, which now and then appear in our author's genuine writings, and also on account of the prayers to deceased Saints which it contains. This last circumstance peculiarly marks it to have been of a later date than the age of Augustine. Frauds of this kind were commonly practised on the works of the fathers in the monastic times. For the most part, however, this book may be read with profit by the serious reader, because of the devotional spirit in which it resembles the genuine works of Augustine.

willing to believe in Christ, who suppose that adulterers can be his members." On the whole, he reprobates the most dangerous notion of the possibility of baptized persons being saved in their sins, and recommends strongly an attention to church-discipline, and to the wholesome practice of catechizing, showing through the whole a zeal for the cause of holiness, and a fear of men's abusing the doctrines of grace*.

In a small treatise to Simplician the aged bishop of Milan, who was both the instructor and the successor of Ambrose, he undertakes to solve the difficulties usually grounded on the ninth chapter to the Romans. And he defends the doctrine of divine grace in his usual manner. His remarks on 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' will deserve to be transcribed. "It is not said, it is not of him that is unwilling and despises, but of God who hardens.—Nothing is done by God to make men worse; only that is not bestowed by him upon some men, which might make them better. Since human society is connected by giving and receiving, who does not see, that no man is accused of iniquity, who exacts what is due to himself, or remits the same? This idea of equity is impressed on us by the Divinity. All men die in Adam, being one mass of iniquity: this death may be called a debt due to Divine Justice, which, whether it be exacted, as with some, or remitted, as with others, there is no iniquity †."

Treatise to
Simplician

The treatise on catechising the ignorant deserves to be read both for the solid and pious vein of instruction which runs through it, and also for the light which it throws on the customs of the church. It appears, that whoever desired to be admitted into the church, was obliged to attend the catechist; and the work, in our author's manner of practising it, was very important. The person, to whom he writes

On Cate-
chising.

* Id. p. 18.

† Id. p. 147.

had expressed a concern, because he could not please himself in his manner of speaking. Augustine observes, that this may easily happen, even when there is no particular fault in our manner of exhorting. He owns that it was generally the case with himself. And that the reason is, the mind of a serious preacher or catechist conceiving in one glance a beauty and weight in his subject, to express which his words are too slow or inadequate, he feels ashamed and disappointed; yet, continues Augustine, he ought not to conclude, that his words are lost, or that they appear as mean to the hearers, as they do to himself. "We see, says he, but in a glass darkly, and we must patiently labour to make greater improvement in divine life. Yet it is desirable to catechise with a cheerful spirit and with sensible comfort in one's own mind. This, however, is the gift of God."

In the method of catechising, he recommends to begin with narration, to give to the pupils a clear and succinct view of the great facts, relative to our religion, both in the Old and New Testament, and to dwell more largely on the more important, and only glance at those which are less so. In the whole manner of doing this, the teacher should have his eyes steadily fixed on the great end, LOVE, and refer every thing, which he relates, to the plan, of divine love in the gift of Jesus Christ, describing the fall and the redemption, and the method of God in winning back the apostate spirits of men to love him, in return for his free love to us in Jesus Christ. Yet he observes, that without fear of Divine wrath, there can be no motive for sinners to approach to the God of love, or any sufficient inducements to engage their minds to seek him. Nor should the catechist be too shy in conveying his instructions, because the catechumen's motives may be merely worldly. It often happens, says he, through the mercy of God, that he, who applied to us for

instruction with carnal views, is brought to feel the value of that, of which at first he only made pretence. But it would be useful, if the catechist could know beforehand what was the frame of the catechumen. If he cannot, he must interrogate him himself, and regulate his discourse by the answers he receives. If the catechumen owns, that fear of Divine wrath for sin, or the terror of some powerful awakening admonition from God, has led him to apply for information, the catechist has then the fairest opening for instruction.

When he has finished his narration, he should add exhortation, laying open the hope of resurrection, and the awful views of divine judgment, of heaven and hell. He should arm the catechumen against the scandals and temptations to which he may be exposed from the perverseness of heretics, the malice of open enemies, or the evil lives of nominal Christians. And he is particularly to be directed, amidst all the precepts given him how to please God and live a holy life, not to trust in any of his works, but in the grace of God alone.

If the person hath had a liberal education, he must not be offended by a tedious and diffusive view of things respecting the facts of Christianity, though a fuller display of the same facts will be needful for the unlearned.—The discourse must be varied; it will be necessary in some things to be more large, as in others to be more brief. For instance, in guarding him against the pride of learning, and in forming his taste, he will need to be seriously instructed to avoid faults of a moral rather than those of a literary nature, and to dread the want of grace in his words and deeds, rather than a solecism or barbarism in language, and to take particular care not to despise illiterate Christians.

He hath already hinted at one discouragement with which the catechist is apt to be affected. Another is, that whereas he would rather himself

read or hear things useful for his own improvement, he is obliged repeatedly to have recourse to things, which to himself are now no longer necessary. No doubt this is one cause in all ages, why so few love the office of instructing the ignorant. Those who themselves are ignorant, are not fit to instruct, and those who are knowing, are apt to be above the task. A pastor, he observes, is engaged in some agreeable study, and is told that he must proceed to catechise. He is vexed, that the course of his work is interrupted, and from the agitation of his mind, is less fitted to discharge the work itself.

Hence, he concludes, it is necessary that the teacher should himself learn those things, which may exhilarate his own mind: for God loveth a cheerful giver. He adds, that the meek and charitable example of the Son of God should to this end be placed before him, to shame him out of his pride and impatience; that if indeed we have any more useful study to prosecute, respecting ourselves, we may then expect that God will speak to us in it more powerfully, when we have undertaken cheerfully to speak for him as well as we could to others; and that the tediousness of that trite and plain road of catechising should be smoothed by divine love in the heart; and that when we consider that we are poor judges of the best order of things, and how much better it is to leave the direction of times and seasons with the all-wise God, we shall not take it amiss, that the providential calls of duty disturbed the order which we had prescribed to ourselves, and that, in short, his will took place before ours.

In interrogating the catechumen, he is to be asked, whether he means to be a Christian for the sake of this life or the next. And one of the most important cautions to be given him is, that he desire to be a Christian solely on account of eternity.

He concludes with the form of a catechetical instruction, which is itself no mean sermon, comprehending the very essentials of the Gospel salvation by Jesus Christ through faith *, the most important doctrines connected with the most material Christian duties.—But enough of this subject: let those pastors, with whom religion is mere form, read and blush, and learn and imitate.

In his treatise on Patience †, he is solicitous to show that its origin is from divine grace, and that it is a virtue, in its whole nature, distinct from any thing seemingly resembling it, which may arise from natural resources. To pave the way to an illustration of this thought, he starts an objection, natural enough to an infidel mind: “If men, to gratify their secular desires, can without divine grace, by the mere strength of nature, endure patiently the greatest hardships, why may not men by the same strength endure afflictions through the love of eternal life?” In answer to this, he observes, that the stronger men’s desires are after worldly things, the more firmly and resolutely will they endure hardships to obtain the gratification of their selfish desires, whether riches, praise, or whatever else. In like manner, the more sincerely they love heavenly things, the more cheerfully will they endure what they are called to suffer on their account. Now worldly desire originates from the human will, is strengthened by the delight which the mind takes in worldly objects, and is confirmed by custom. But the love of God has no such origin; it is not from ourselves, it is altogether by the Holy Ghost given to us. And he goes on to show, that electing grace, not in consequence of any works of man, but previous to them all, while he is ungodly and without strength, chooses him to salvation, and bestows on him the whole power to will and to do, and is itself the first and decisive source of all the

Treatise on
Patience.

* Id. p. 217.

† Id. p. 243.

good which he does, which good is all along assisted, supported, and maintained to the end, and at length rewarded hereafter.

It is not in commenting on the Scriptures, that the peculiar excellencies of Augustine appear. The fanciful mode of Origen vitiated the whole plan of exposition, from his days to the Reformation. Yet, Augustine has far less of it, and enters more precisely into the sacred oracles than most of the fathers of his time; but he does this better in expounding a particular point of doctrine, which he has before him, than in any of his orderly comments. His exposition of the Psalms is full of pious sentiments, and he breaks out from time to time into beautiful and pathetic observations. He sees Christ every where in the Psalms, though he is not always happy in his manner of expounding the passages. On his exposition of St. John's Gospel, similar observations may be made. It cannot, however, be denied, that extremely imperfect as his expositions are, they have been highly useful to the church, because the lights which they contained were not only beneficial to pious men in the dark ages, but afforded also much assistance to the reformers, when a more judicious and intelligent vein of interpretation took place.

Treatise on
Christian
doctrine:

His treatise on Christian doctrine* deserves to be perused throughout by young ministers; for the purpose of forming the taste and directing the manner, as well as enlightening the understanding, and warming the heart of him who undertakes to instruct mankind. As a preacher, Augustine doubtless excelled; but his excellence lay in exhibiting that which was useful to the vulgar, not that which was entertaining to the learned. Perhaps, in no age was the pastoral taste more depraved, than it is in the present. A highly finished, elaborate and elegant style, is looked on as the perfection of a Christian speaker; and the manner, rather than the matter, is the chief object. It is not

* TOM. iii. beginning.

considered, that an artificial and polished arrangement of sentences is lost on a vulgar audience; and those who affect it, are, it is to be feared, little moved themselves with the importance of divine things, and are far more solicitous for their own character as speakers, than for the spiritual profit of their hearers. Yet in no age did God Almighty ever more clearly show, by the effects, what was agreeable in his sight. What a number of learned and elaborate sermons have been preached to no purpose! even the truth of the doctrine that is in them is rendered, in a great measure, useless by the wisdom of words, with which it has been clothed: While plain artless colloquial addresses to the populace, by men fearing God, and speaking of divine things in fervour and charity, have been attended with DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT AND OF POWER, and souls have been rescued, through their means, from sin and Satan. Classical and ornamental knowledge is not the first thing to be aimed at by a pastor. If he is yet very young, his time indeed is laudably employed in cultivating his faculties in this respect. And if his genius for eloquence be strong and acute, he will soon learn the justest rules sufficiently for the purpose of his profession. There is indeed an eloquence in the Scriptures, but it is an eloquence adapted to the subject, plainly divine. A pastor who has talents for speaking, attended with superior learning and endowments, will study to attain "a diligent negligence," that he may never overshoot the capacities of his audience, either by refined reasonings or by artificial elegancies of diction. Plain, downright, above all things perspicuous and intelligible, without being rude or clownish, he will descend to the lowest comprehension of his audience; and his grandeur and sublimity will appear in things, not in words. He will gladly give up his reputation to the fastidiousness of critics; for he has souls to bring into Christ's fold, and is

not solicitous of the praise of men. He will show, without designing it, from time to time, that he CAN speak more elaborately, and more elegantly ; but eloquence will follow his subject, not go before it. This will be the plan of a man of genius and learning in the work of the pulpit : he will humble himself, that Christ may be exalted. But Christ can do his work by workmen of slower and more ordinary capacities, and he often has done so*.

I have not wandered from the subject of CHRIS-

* Augustine knew how to practise his own rules of eloquence, and two instances related by himself show him, notwithstanding the defective taste of his age, to have been no mean orator. While he acted as a presbyter at Hippo, under Valerius his bishop, he was appointed by him to preach to the people, in order to reclaim them from riotous feasting on solemn days. He opened the Scriptures, and read to them the most vehement rebukes. He besought them by the ignominy and sorrow which they brought upon themselves, and by the blood of Christ, not to destroy themselves, to pity him who spake to them with so much affection, and to show some regard to their venerable old bishop, who, out of tenderness to them, had charged him to instruct them in the truth. "I did not make them weep †, says he, by first weeping over them, but while I was preaching, their tears prevented mine. Then I own I could not restrain myself. After we had wept together, I began to entertain great hope of their amendment." He now varied from the discourse he had prepared, because the present softness of their minds seemed to require something different. In fine, he had the satisfaction to find the evil redressed from that very day.

The other occasion was this : "We must not imagine," says he, "that a man has spoken powerfully, when he receives much applause. This is sometimes given to low turns of wit, and merely ornamental eloquence. But the sublime overwhelms the mind with its vehemence, it strikes them dumb ; it melts them into tears. When I endeavoured to persuade the people of Cæsarea to abolish their barbarous sports, in which, at a certain time of the year, they fought publicly for several days, I said what I could ; but while I heard only their acclamations, I thought I had done nothing ; when they wept, I entertained a hope that the horrible custom which they had received from their ancestors would be abolished.—It is now upwards of eight years since that time, and by the grace of God they have ever since been restrained from the practice." Here was true eloquence, and, what is of far more consequence, true piety in a preacher.

† Ep. 29. to Alypius.

TIAN doctrine, handled by Augustine. What I have mentioned are in a great measure his ideas *. One important rule he adds, which, though plain to every serious mind, is too much overlooked by many. "Let our Christian orator," says he, "who would be understood and be heard with pleasure, pray before he speak. Let him lift up his thirsty soul to God, before he pronounce any thing. For since there are many things which may be said, and many modes of saying the same thing, who knows, except he who knows the hearts of all men, what is most expedient to be said at the present hour? And who can cause us to speak what we ought, and as we ought, unless he in whose hands we and our words are? And, by these means, he may learn all that is to be taught, and may acquire a faculty of speaking as becomes a pastor. At the hour itself of speaking a faithful spirit will think his Lord's words adapted to his circumstances: 'Think not what or how ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.' If the Holy Spirit speak in those who are delivered up to persecutors for Christ, why not also in those who deliver Christ to learners? But, on the other side, if any say, that men need to know no rules nor follow any studies, if the Holy Ghost make men teachers, it might be said also, men need not to pray, because our Lord saith, 'Your Father knoweth what ye have need of before ye ask him;' and at this rate the rules of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus might be superseded. Prayer and study therefore should go hand in hand; and the two epistles to Timothy and that to Titus are of standing authority in the church, and ought to be deeply meditated upon by every one who undertakes the office of a teacher."

The whole treatise deserves to be studied by junior pastors; the fourth book particularly; in the

Excellence
of Book IV.

* B. iv.

latter part of which he lays down the three sorts of style so judiciously described by Cicero, exemplifies them by Scripture instances, and instructs his young Christian orator how to adapt them to the nature of the subjects which lie before him.

Augustine
on the
Trinity.

His treatise on the Trinity* is very elaborate. Perhaps all that has ever been said in any age, in vindication and explanation of that great mystery, is contained in this book. It is in perfect unison with the expositions and sentiments of all the pious men who preceded him, and particularly with the views of Novatian in his treatise on the same subject. Whether the writers were of the general church or dissenters, they are perfectly unanimous in confessing the Trinity in unity, and in proving the doctrine from Scriptures, and in leaving something after all inexplicable in the subject; but in a manner congruous to the incomprehensibility of the Divine essence. Augustine does full justice indeed to the argument, but it must be confessed, he goes too far; he loses both himself and his readers, by metaphysical subtilties and vain attempts to find analogies and similitudes, yet with a spirit so humble and cautious, as to separate carefully his conjectures from divine truth, and to leave the authority of Scripture unviolated. He, who has leisure, may peruse the whole work with profit. The humble and serious spirit of the author appears particularly in the several prefaces to its parts, and in the prayer at the close, an extract of which is as follows: "O Lord our God, we believe in thee the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. For the Truth would not have said, Go, baptize all nations, in the name, &c. if thou wert not a Trinity. Nor wouldest thou command us to be baptized in the name of him who is not God. I have sought thee, and examined and laboured much in composing this treatise. My God, my only hope, hear me, lest, through weariness, I cease to seek

* Tom. iii.

thee. Thou, who wilt be found, and hast given me increasing hope of finding thee, give me strength to seek thee. Before thee are my strength and my weakness. Preserve that and heal this. Before thee are my knowledge and ignorance. Where thou hast opened to me, uphold me, when I enter ; where thou hast shut up, open to me when I knock. I would remember thee, understand thee, love thee. Augment in me these things, till thou perfectly form me anew. I know it is written, in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin : but I would to God I spake only concerning thy word, and in praising thee ; I should then do what is acceptable in thy sight, though I spake much. For thy Apostle would not have directed his son in the faith to preach the word, and to be instant* in season, out of season, were not this the case. Free me, O God, from the much inward speaking, which, while I fly to thy mercy, I feel in my miserable soul. For my thoughts are not silent when my tongue is. Many, alas ! are my thoughts, which thou knowest to be vain. Grant me not to consent to them ; and, if my nature delights in them, grant me to disapprove and not to dwell on them, even in a slumbering manner. Nor let them be so strong, as to proceed to any thing active ; let my will, my conscience, be safe from them under thy defence. When we come to thee, many of those things we now say, shall cease, and thou shalt remain alone all in all, and we shall without end say one thing, praising thee in one, being made one in thee. What is thine in these books, may thine acknowledge ; if there be any thing of mine, may thou and thine forgive ?”

On Augustine's Sermons, I shall make only one remark. The reader would not think them to be the works of the learned and eloquent author of the City of God. But we must remember, that in them he was addressing not scholars, but the populace.

Augustine's
Sermons.

* 2 Tim. iv.

They are plain and simple, but weighty and serious. He follows his own pastoral rules, and is himself the preacher he describes.

Amidst the many arduous and laborious employments of Augustine, in support of the doctrines of Christianity, and in the pastoral care, he yet found time to manage a large epistolary correspondence, a great part of which is preserved, and some specimens of it shall close this chapter.

Epistolary
correspond-
ence of
Augustine.

The correspondence between him and the famous Jerom, the monk of Palestine, begins with the 8th, and ends with the 19th epistle. The principal subject of it was the reprehension of St. Peter by St. Paul, mentioned in the 2d chapter to the Galatians. Jerom, following the stream of the Greek expositors, who had gone before him, and who imitated the vicious mode of Origen, had asserted, that Paul could not seriously blame Peter for that which he had practised himself, in the circumcision of Timothy, and that, therefore, his rebuke of Peter was an officious lie, in which the two Apostles understood one another in private, and that the design was to deceive the people with a charitable view. Jerom*, it seems, carried his admiration of both the Apostles to a superstitious excess, and could not bear to think of Peter being really found fault with for dissimulation. To maintain the honour of Peter, he is driven to undertake the vindication of deceit, when employed for a charitable purpose, and, what is worse, to fix the stain of a lie on a part of the revealed word of God, and to represent Paul, when writing by inspiration, as guilty of falsehood. Such mean and dangerous views attend superstition and self-righteous formality ! I have not seen a practical case, which more evidently showed the low declining state of godliness in these times.

Jerom's
sentiments.

Augustine, jealous of the honour of the divine word, and sensible of the danger of admitting

* Tom. ii. from p. 9 to 19.

falsehood, either into the books of inspiration, or into common life, with the same zeal that moved him to write against lying of all sorts, undertakes to clear up the subject, and, with great accuracy, explains the whole transaction, in the manner which we saw stated in the former volume*. Two essential points of Christianity are connected with his exposition, namely, the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ Jesus, and the duty of abstaining from deceit of the tongue of all kinds. All along, however, he treats the aged presbyter with a modesty becoming a junior.

Opposed by
Augustine.

Jerom is chafed to find himself contradicted, defends his interpretation by the authority of Origen, its inventor, and seems to rebuke the daring spirit of Augustine, for venturing out of the common road, and advises him, if he burned with a strong desire of glory, rather to seek out some champion of his own age, with whom he might contend, than to molest him, who was a worn-out veteran. The angry monk seems to have measured the temper of the bishop of Hippo by his own. Learned as he undoubtedly was, he was still more distinguished for vain glory than for learning, and seems to have known too little of that sincere love of truth, which is connected with humility, the love of God, and the desire of leading souls to heaven, and is un-mixed with all selfish considerations; a love which, doubtless, reigned in the breast of Augustine.

Jerom is
displeased.

Augustine finding that he had, though without design, given offence, answered to this effect: "In your letters I find many proofs of your kindness, and some marks of your disgust.—Far be it from me to be offended; I shall rather have reason to be thankful, if I be instructed and corrected by your correspondence. But, dearest brother, you would not think that I could be hurt by your answers, if you did not feel yourself hurt by my writings. As I

Christian
mildness
and moderation of
Augustine.

* Vol. I. p. 30.

cannot believe that you would think of hurting me unjustly, it remains that I own my fault, in having offended you by those letters, which I cannot deny to be mine. Why do I strive against the stream, and not rather ask pardon? I beseech you, therefore, by the gentleness of Christ, that if I have offended you, you would forgive, lest you be induced by hurting me in return, to render evil for evil." He goes on in a strain of mildness very uncommon among controversialists, and I observe nothing in the whole course of the debate, (which is far too long to quote,) that ought justly to give offence to Jerom. So unreasonably has our author been censured for heat and temerity, by writers who seem not to have been much acquainted with his works*. But these are faults vastly remote from Augustine, nor do I know any human author, ancient or modern, who dealt in controversy, so remarkably free from censoriousness and malignity. "I was much affected, says he, with the conclusion of your letter, in which you say, I wish I could embrace you, and by mutual conference teach or learn something. I say, for my part, I wish at least we lived nearer one another, that we might confer together more easily by letter. For I see there neither is nor can be so much knowledge of the Scriptures in me as in you. If I have any ability this way, I employ it in the service of God. Nor have I leisure, because of ecclesiastical occupations, to attend to more Scriptural studies than those which relate to the pastoral care."

Quarrel
between
Jerom and
Ruffinus.

In the same letter he deeply laments the fierce quarrel which had arisen between Jerom and Ruffinus, and which, at that time, made a great noise in the Christian world. "I confess I was much affected, that so grievous a discord should arise between two such intimate friends, united in a bond

* How delusive, and yet how common a thing is it, to form our idea of characters from the report of others, rather than from our own knowledge and careful investigation!

of union, well known to almost all the churches. I saw in your letters what pains you took to moderate your anger. Wo to the world because of offences! Truly that Scripture is fulfilled, Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. But why do I lament this of others, since I know not what I myself shall do? I may with difficulty, perhaps, know myself at present, but what I shall be hereafter I know not.—While I am refreshed with your kind words, I am again stimulated with the keenest grief, to see two men, to whom God had given to suck the honey of his word together in the sweetest friendship, fall into such a state of virulent hostility. Wo is me, I would fall at your feet, I would weep as long as I could, I would entreat as much as my affections would permit, now each one for himself, now both for each other, and for others, and particularly the weak for whom Christ died, who now behold your animosities with great danger of hurt to themselves.—But I tell you that my concern was really deep and strong, when I found you were really offended with me, and it has led me to be more prolix, perhaps, than I ought.”

This is a specimen not only of the moderate temper, but also of the ardent charity, which every where appears in the writings of this author. Jerom himself was moved, and begs that the debate might be closed on both sides. And he appears ever after to have both esteemed and loved Augustine.

The people of Madaura sent a person, named Florentius, to Augustine, with a letter, desiring his assistance in some secular affair. The inhabitants of this place were as yet devoted to idolatry, and, through an insincerity very common with profane and careless minds, they addressed their epistle, “To Father Augustine, in the Lord, eternal salvation;” and closed it with these words, “We wish you, Sir, in God and his Christ, for many years to rejoice in

Message to
Augustine
from the
people of
Madaura.

your clergy." It behoved not him, who had written a book in defence of strict unequivocal truth in all things, to pass these compliments unnoticed. He tells the Madaurians* that he had, as far as God permitted, attended to the business of Florentius, and then proceeds to expose the inconsistency of such professions with their idolatrous practices. On the first sight of them he owns he was suddenly struck with a belief of their conversion, or at least with a hope, that they desired to be converted by his ministry. "I asked the bearer of your letter, says he, whether ye were Christians, or desired so to be. By whose answer I was grieved, that the name of Christ was, to you, become an object of derision. For I could not think that there was any other Lord, except the Lord Christ, through whom a bishop could properly be called father. If ye wrote this with sincerity, what hinders you from seeking salvation in the same Lord, by whom ye salute us? If ye wrote thus with a jocose deceitfulness, do ye impose on me the care of your business, in such a manner that instead of extolling with due veneration, ye insult by your flattery, that NAME, through which I have power to do any thing for you? Dearest brethren, know that I speak this with inexpressible concern for you, believing that a rejection of my warning will aggravate your condemnation." He goes on to lay open briefly, but strongly, the evidences of Christianity: and then tells them, that "there is an invisible God, the creator of all things, whose greatness is unsearchable; that there is a person†, by whom the invisible Majesty is exhibited, the Word, equal to him who begat him; and that there is a SANCTITY, the sanctifier of all things which are done in holiness, the inseparable and undivided communion of the invisible Deity and the Word. Who

* Ep. 42.

† I use the word Person, because I can scarcely otherwise express the author's meaning; but it is proper to tell the reader that there is nothing for it in the original.

can look, with a serene and sincere mind, at this Being of beings, which I have laboured to express, though unable to exhibit with accuracy, and in beholding, forget himself, and obtain eternal salvation, unless, confessing his sins, he pull down all the mountains of his pride, and lower himself to receive God his teacher? Therefore the Word humbled himself, that we might more fear to be elated with the pride of man, than to be humbled after the example of God. Christ crucified is our object. Nothing is more potent than divine humility.—I beseech you, if ye named Christ not in vain, in your epistle, that I may not have written this in vain. But if ye did it in unthinking gaiety of heart, fear him whom the subject world now expects its Judge. The affection of my heart, expressed in this page, will be a witness at the day of judgment, to comfort you, if ye believe, to confound you, if ye remain in infidelity.”

The Madaurians, I suppose, expected not such a letter. It deserved to be in part laid before the reader, as a proper example of the open, manly, affectionate method in which Christians should reply to unmeaning compliments, or polite dissimulation. Maximus, a grammarian, answered by a letter*, partly complimentary, partly satirical, the most specious sentiment of which is, that Pagans and Christians, all believing one God, mean much the same thing. Augustine, in reply, gives him to understand, that the subject requires not levity, but seriousness, and that, by the help of the one living and true God, he will discuss these things more at large, when he shall perceive him to be in good earnest, giving him to understand, that the Christians in Madaura worshipped none but the living and true God.

A letter to Macedonius, concerning the road to true felicity †, deserves the serious perusal of every

Letter to
Macedo-
nius.

* Ep. 43.

† Ep. 52.

proud philosopher. Men who seek happiness from themselves, though Christians in form, are in effect, on the same plan as the ancient Stoics, whose proud pretences are justly ridiculed in this letter. Our author owns, that extreme torments would make life miserable, if the subject of them were destitute of hope, even though he were possessed of some virtues. He describes the way of felicity to lie through a course of humility, of faith, of the love of God and our neighbours, and of the hope of a future life of bliss.

Reply to
Dioscorus.

In reply to Dioscorus *, he justly guards him against the curious and presumptuous spirit of philosophizing, and dares to pronounce, in opposition to Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and several others of the fathers, that Christian piety needs not the assistance of secular instruction, but ought to depend solely on the Scriptures, and he cautions his friend against the pride of secular learning, representing humility to be the first, the second, the third, the all in true religion, as Demosthenes said of delivery in oratory. Here is another point, in which we see the revival of apostolical truth in the West, by the grace of God, under the hand of Augustine.

Letter on
prayer, to
Proba.

In his letter to Proba, on prayer †, he gives a sound and judicious exposition of the Lord's prayer; and observes, that it is so full and comprehensive, that though a man may pray in other words, and those of great variety, yet every lawful subject of prayer may be reduced to one or other of the petitions which it contains. Proba was a rich widow, and had a numerous family; and when we consider the large extension and fashionableness of the monastic spirit at that time, it seems an instance of candour in Augustine, that he does not hint to her a word of advice to follow the custom of the religious in that age, but contents himself with directing her to serve God in her present station. He

* Ep. 56.

† Ep. 121.

advises her to be a DESOLATE WIDOW* in her frame and spirit, looking for heavenly things, not earthly, and shows within how small a compass our prayers for temporal things ought to be confined.

As a remedy against much speaking in prayer, he advises to utter short and quick ejaculations, rather than long-continued petitions, if the mind be not in a fervent state ; but if the spirit be intent and vigorous, the petitions, he thinks may be prolonged without any danger of offending against our Lord's precept in the Sermon on the Mount. And he speaks in an instructive manner on the office of the Holy Spirit, as interceding for the saints with unutterable groanings. The great object in prayer, he observes, should constantly be, the enjoyment of God ; and he adds, that however inadequate the believer's conceptions be, yet he has a distinct idea of his object ; so distinct, that you can never impose on a real saint by offering him something else in the room of it. He knows what he wants, and he knows that this or that is not the thing which he wants. The whole epistle, if we except a few fanciful expositions, after the manner of Origen, is excellent, and breathes a superior spirit of godliness.

One Cornelius wishing to receive from him a consolatory letter, on account of the loss of his wife †, Augustine, who knew that, notwithstanding this request, he lived in the excess of uncleanness, tells him, in allusion to the words of Cicero against Catiline, " I could wish to be gentle, I could wish, in so great dangers, not to be negligent, but can a bishop patiently hear a man, who lives in sin, with greediness asking for a panegyric on his godly spouse, to mitigate his sadness on account of her decease ?" He goes on to exhort him to repentance, with as much severity as might be expected from a faithful pastor of the mildest temper.

Consolatory
letter to
Cornelius.

In the close of a letter to Florentina ‡, he

Letter to
Florentina.

* 1 Tim. v. 5.

† Ep. 125.

‡ Ep. 132.

reminds her, "that though she had learned something salutary from him, yet she ought firmly to remember, that she must be taught by the inner Master of the inner man, who shows in the heart the truth of what is said, because neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth." While such views of divine teaching prevailed in the church, even all the ashes of superstition could not extinguish the fire of true godliness. It is the infelicity of our times, that not only the profane, but many serious persons are not a little irreverent in their ideas of spiritual illumination; and when I think of the miserable effects of this temper on the human mind, I am at a loss to determine whether I most dislike the childish superstitiousness of Augustine's age, or the proud pretensions to rationality of the present. To so much greater a degree has profaneness advanced under the latter than under the former.

Letter to
Edicia.

The letter to Edicia* deserves to be attended to as characteristic of the taste of the times. This woman had, unknown to her husband, made a vow of perpetual continency. In so great reputation, however, were such practices at that time, that her husband consented afterwards to her resolution, and they still lived together, though he would not suffer her to assume the habit of a nun. Some time after, two travelling monks imposed on her simplicity to such a degree, that she gave nearly all her property to them, though she had a son of her own by her husband. Augustine reminds her of St. Paul's direction, which she had broken†: and it is indeed observable, with what wisdom, even the most occasional rules of the divine word are delivered, as the breach of them is ever attended with mischievous consequences. He finds fault with her vow in the first place, because made without her husband's consent, and with her disposal of her property in the second place for the same reason; and, as the

* Ep. 199.

† 1 Cor. vii. 5.

husband, incensed at her folly, had now fallen into libidinous practices, he teaches her to humble herself deeply before God, as having been a great instrument of his fall, and directs her to submit to her husband, to entreat his forgiveness, and to use every healing method in her power. The whole subject is an instance of piety and good sense struggling in the bishop of Hippo, against the torrent of absurdity and fashionable superstition.

At Calama, a colony in Africa, the Pagan interest seems to have much predominated ; so that, notwithstanding the imperial laws inhibiting their public rites, the party performed a religious solemnity in the city, and came with a crowd of dancers before the church. The clergy endeavouring to prevent this, the church was attacked with stones. The insult was repeated, and Christians found themselves unable to obtain justice. Their buildings were burned and plundered, one Christian was killed, and the bishop was obliged to hide himself. And so deep-rooted was the prejudice of the colony against Christianity, that the magistrates and men of rank chose to be tame spectators of these enormities. One person alone, a stranger, but as it seems a character of great influence, interposed, saved many Christians, whose lives had been in imminent danger, and recovered much of their property which had been plundered ; whence Augustine justly concludes *, how easily the whole mischief might have been checked, had the magistrates done their duty. Nectarius, a Pagan of the place, wrote a neat and genteel letter to the bishop of Hippo, begging his interest with the reigning powers to prevent, as much as possible, the punishment of the guilty. Augustine states to him the facts, as above, and appeals to his conscience, whether it was possible or right for government to overlook such crimes. He shows, that Christians lived in peace

* Ep. 202.

and good will toward all men, and that he would do the best he could to procure such a temperature of justice and mercy, as might prevent the repetition of these evils, and induce Pagans to take care of their best interests. He tells him, that he himself had been at Calama lately, and had taken occasion to warn them of the danger of their souls. They heard his exhortation, and entreated his interest. "But God forbid," says he, "that it should be any pleasure to me to be supplicated by those who refuse to supplicate our Lord." As Nectarius himself, had spoken of his love to his country, Augustine is not sparing in his admonitions to him, to seek an acquaintance with a heavenly country, and preaches to him the truth and excellency of the Gospel, as well as exposes, in his usual manner, the futility of Paganism.

CH A P. VIII.

MISCELLANEOUS PARTICULARS CONCERNING AUGUSTINE.

I HAVE comprised, in several distinct chapters, a variety of matter relating to the bishop of Hippo, for the sake of perspicuity; two more chapters must be added, one containing various articles of his life and conduct, including the account of his death; and the other, a view of his theological character. It is not in my power to gratify the reader with any thing like a regular history of the effusion of the Spirit of God, which took place toward the end of the last, and in the beginning of this century. We have a far more particular account of Augustine's literary works, than of his ministerial. On the whole, however, some genuine information may be collected, concerning the great work of God in his day.

The Manichees could not fail to attract a considerable portion of his attention; he had himself suffered extremely through their means; they abounded in Africa, and God abundantly blessed his labours in opposing their doctrines, and in recovering souls which had been seduced. One instance, to the honour of divine grace, deserves to be recorded in the very words of the writer*. “Not only I (Possidonius) who write this life, but also other brethren, who lived together with the bishop in Hippo, know that he once said to us, being at table together: ‘Did you take notice of my sermon to-day in the church, that its beginning and end were not according to my custom; that I did not finish what I proposed, but left my subject in suspense?’ We answered we were at the time astonished, and now recollect it. I believe,” said he, “the reason was, because the Lord, perhaps, intended some erroneous person in the congregation, through my forgetfulness and mistake, to be taught and healed; for, in his hand are we and our discourses. For while I was handling the points of the question proposed, I was led into a digression, and so, without concluding or explaining the subject in hand, I terminated the argument rather against Manicheism, on which I had no design to have spoken a word, than concerning the matter proposed.” Next day, or two days after, so far as I can remember, came a merchant, called Firmus, and while Augustine was sitting in the monastery, in our presence, he threw himself at his feet, shedding tears, entreating his and our prayers, and confessing that he had lived many years a Manichee; that he had vainly spent much money in the support of that sect, and that, by the bishop’s discourses, he had, through divine mercy, been lately convinced of his error, and restored to the church. Augustine and we inquired by what sermon in particular he had been convinced; he

* Possidonius, *Vita Aug.*

informed us; and as we all recollected the substance of that discourse, we admired, and were astonished at the profound counsel of God for the salvation of souls, and we glorified and blessed his holy name, who, when, whence, and as he pleases, by persons knowing and unknowing, works out the salvation of men. From that time, the man, devoting himself to God, gave up his business, and, improving in piety, was by the will of God compelled against his own will, in another region, to receive the office of Presbyter, preserving still the same sanctity; and, perhaps, he is yet alive beyond the sea."

Augustine detected also the base and blasphemous practices of the Manichees, and thus guarded the minds of the unwary. One of them, by name Felix, coming to Hippo to sow his sentiments, Augustine held a public dispute with him in the church, and, after the second or third conference, Felix owned himself convinced, and received the Gospel.

Arianism also being introduced into Africa by the Goths, who professed it, engaged the attention of Augustine, and he exerted himself in a controversy with Maximinus their bishop.

Of his labours against Pelagianism it will now only be needful to say*, that he lived to see the fruit of them in the growth of Christian purity, both in his own church and in other parts of Africa.

While he thus endeavoured to promote the cause of piety, he was always observed to bear, with much patience and meekness, the irregularities of the perverse, and to be more disposed to mourn over them with grief, than resent them with anger.

To the manifold labours of this bishop in preaching, visiting, and writing, was added the troublesome employment of hearing causes. For, according to the rules of 1 Cor. vi. the Christians of Hippo used to bring matters of controversy before the bishop. And the examination and decision of these engaged

* Possidonius.

him till the hour of repast, and sometimes he was employed in them fasting the whole day. Certainly it is not reasonable that a Christian pastor should be statedly employed in such things : but Augustine, following the customary practice of the time, made it subservient to the purest purposes. He had by this an opportunity of examining the dispositions of his people, and their improvements or defects in faith and good works ; and he explained to them, occasionally, their duties as Christians, by opening to them the word of God, by exhorting them to piety, and by rebuking sinners : And in all this he acted with perfect disinterestedness.

In attendance on councils he was frequent, and in them he distinguished himself in the defence both of Christian doctrine and discipline. In ordaining clergymen, he took care to follow the custom of the church, and to act with the concurrence of the majority of the people *. His dress, furniture, and diet, were moderated between extremes ; and it will deserve to be mentioned, as an instance of superiority to popular superstition, that he always drank wine, but with great moderation. He constantly practised hospitality ; and at table encouraged reading or argument ; and as his spirit, ever humble and tender since his conversion, could not bear the too fashionable mode of detraction and slander, he had a distich written on his table, which intimated, that whoever attacked the characters of the absent were to be excluded †. Nor was he content with a formal declaration ; he seriously warned his guests to abstain from deſamation. “ On one occasion,” says his biographer, “ some bishops, his intimate friends, breaking the rule in conversation, he at length was so much roused as to say, that either those lines

* Possidonius.

† Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam,
Hanc mensam ventitam noverit esse sibi.—Poss.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH:

must be erased from the table, or he himself would rise from the midst of the meal, and go into his bedchamber ; and of this I and others who were present are witnesses."

He was conscientiously attentive to the wants of the poor, and sedulously relieved them out of the revenues of the church, or the oblations of the faithful. And, in answer to the invidious complaints of some, concerning the riches amassed by the church, he freely offered to give them up to any of the laity who would take the charge of them. Doubtless the growth of superstition was even then bringing on that accession of wealth to the clergy, which afterwards grew to so enormous a height. But purer hands than those of Augustine never handled the possessions of the Church ; he seems chargeable, even with inattention to his own rights ; as he committed the whole of the temporals to his clergy in succession, and never made himself sufficiently acquainted with particulars, to be able, from his own inspection, to correct any mismanagement. He himself lived perfectly unconnected with the world at one table, and in one house, with his clergy, and never purchased house or land. He checked also the fashionable method of men's leaving their possessions to the church, whenever he saw reason to think that the testators had near relations, who, in justice and equity, had a preferable claim. With much pleasure did he withdraw as soon as possible from any secular cares which he had not been able to avoid, that he might give himself wholly to divine things. Hence he always remained, as much as possible, content with old buildings and utensils, lest he should be entangled with concerns of this nature. Yet to relieve the indigent, and to redeem captives, he scrupled not to sell the vessels of the church, after the example of Ambrose.

His abstinence from the society of women we

should think, in our times, to have been carried beyond the due bounds; yet it hindered not his provident care for their spiritual welfare.

A little before his death he was employed in revising and correcting his works. This care produced the publication of his RETRACTATIONS, the chief use of which book is, that it enables us to fix, with a considerable degree of precision, what were his GENUINE works and thoughts. It pleased God, however, not to suffer him to depart this life without a cloud of grievous affliction; and the relish of heaven, after which for many years he had panted with uncommon ardour, was quickened still more by a bitter taste of the evils of this life in declining age.

Genseric, king of the Vandals, invaded Africa, and made a dreadful desolation. To the tender mind of Augustine*, the devastation of the country,

* The tenderness of his spirit, on one occasion, led him into an error in conduct, which much afflicted him. Fussala was a little city in the extremity of his diocese, forty miles from Hippo. The country about it was full of Donatists; and their re-union to the church was accompanied with much difficulty. The priests sent by Augustine were maimed, blinded, or murdered. Augustine, on account of the distance, was not capable of serving the people as he could wish; and he at length determined to settle a bishop there, who should undertake the charge of Fussala and the neighbouring district. As soon as he had found a proper priest, he desired the primate of Numidia to come over, and in conjunction with himself, ordain him. The priest, whom he had chosen, retracted, and the primate was arrived. Augustine was unwilling to send him back without doing the business, and through the facility of his temper, was induced to present, for ordination, a young man named Anthony, whom he had from infancy educated in his monastery, who had never been tried as he ought to have been. The bishop of Hippo had soon occasion to repent of his good nature. The young prelate was complained of by his flock, for rapacity and licentiousness, and was too scandalous in his manners to be endured any longer. His connexion with Fussala was therefore dissolved by a formal sentence. Anthony, however, appealed to the bishop of Rome, who was inclined to support him. Augustine insisted on the propriety of his expulsion, and maintained, that compassion for the man himself, as well as for the people, whom he had so much abused, required that the sentence

the cruelties inflicted on the pastors, the desolation of churches, and the destruction of all church-order which ensued, must have been peculiarly afflicting. Count Boniface, one of the greatest Roman heroes of those times, undertook the defence of Hippo against the barbarians. He had not been without convictions of divine things, and Augustine, who was intimate with him, had endeavoured to improve those convictions to salutary purposes, But, to seek human glory, and the honour which cometh from God only, at the same time, was found to be incompatible. Boniface gained a shining reputation, and followed the world. In these trying times the bishop of Hippo again endeavoured to draw him from the love of the world to God, and Boniface seems all along to have sinned reluctantly. What God might do for him at last, during the time that he lived after the mortal wound, which he received in a duel, we know not. The man, however, was brave and sincere, and had a steady regard for men of real godliness. He defended Hippo for fourteen months, which, after that time, with all Africa, fell under the power of the Vandals.

But Augustine was taken away from the evil to come. While he mourned under the miseries of the times, in company with Possidonius and several should be supported, lest he should be hardened still more in iniquity. Anthony himself made restitution of the sums of which he had defrauded them; yet he prevailed afterwards on the primate of Numidia to believe him innocent, and to interest himself in his favour. The spirit of Augustine, then threescore and eight years of age, was much broken with this affair. He condemned his own imprudence, and observed, that the danger into which Anthony had cast both himself and the people, so much affected him, that he was almost resolved to relinquish the episcopal office, and bewail his error, the remainder of his days, in privacy*. As it appears that Augustine still governed the church of Fussala after this, it seems that the dispute was settled to his satisfaction, and that Anthony was not restored to his See||. The story deserves to be noticed, as illustrating the church discipline of the times, and the character of Augustine.

* Ep. 209.

† Ep. 224.

bishops, who had fled for shelter to Hippo, he told them, that he had prayed, either that God would free them from the siege, or endue his servants with patience, or take him out of the world to himself. In the third month of the siege he was seized with a fever, which ended in his dissolution, in the year 430. He lived seventy-six years, forty of which he had been a presbyter or bishop. He used to say, that a Christian should never cease to repent, even to the hour of his death. He had David's penitential psalms inscribed on the wall, in his last sickness, and he read and wept abundantly; and for ten days before he expired he desired to be uninterrupted, that he might give himself wholly to devotion, except at certain intervals. He had preached the word of God constantly, till his last sickness. He left no will: he had neither money nor lands to leave. He left his library to the church. Of his own relations he had taken competent care before. "In his writings," says Possidonius, "the holy man appears: but those who could have heard and seen him speak in public, and particularly in private conversation would have seen still more." Pity it is, that a man, who had known him for forty years, should have left us so imperfect an account. But the vigour of the human mind was then much declined, and superstition made men childish, though it did not destroy the spirit of piety.

CHAP. IX.

THE THEOLOGY OF AUGUSTINE.

THE serious reader, from a consideration of the mournful condition of the African churches in regard to external things at the time of Augustine's death, will naturally be led to inquire what

trembling, as it were, he cried out, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand?" For he saw almost the whole of human life surrounded with sins, like barking dogs; all consciences to be upbraided; not a holy heart to be found that could presume on its own righteousness: which, because it cannot be found, therefore let every heart rest on the mercy of the Lord his God, and say, if thou, Lord, &c. But what is my hope? There is a propitiation with thee." So constantly, in all ages, do real good men feel alike on this subject: "The humble shall hear and be glad."

The peculiar work for which Augustine was evidently raised by Providence was, to restore the doctrine of divine grace to the church. A vain philosophy had corrupted it partially under Justin, far more completely under Origen. What wonder: To trust in ourselves was the avowed boast of all the Philosophers. An idea of providential kindness in external things floated in the minds of some: but virtue and every internal excellence they expected only from themselves*. In this they only copied the impression of that self-righteousness which is natural to all. The distinguishing glory of the Gospel is to teach humility, and to give to God his due honour; and Augustine was singularly prepared for this by a course of internal experience. He had felt human insufficiency completely, and knew, "that in himself dwelt no good thing." Hence he was admirably qualified to describe the total depravity and apostasy of human nature, and he described what he knew to be true. Thus, in

* Hear Tully, de Nat. Deor. Virtutem nemo unquam Deo acceptam retulit nimirum recte; propter virtutem enim jura laudamur, et in virtute recte gloriamur, quod non continget, si donum a Deo, non a nobis haberemus. It is sufficient to tell the English reader, that in this sentence the same self-sufficiency of the human heart, which mere moral preaching encourages, is expressed by the Pagan philosopher, as the undoubted creed of all mankind.

the West, the doctrine of grace was happily revived; and romantic theories, built on mere reasonings, gave way to scriptural truth, supported by experience. And, in all ages, in spite of pride and prejudice, the doctrine of grace has this advantage over the minds of men, that conscience, wherever it is awakened to do its office, always speaks in its favour.

The rise and progress of Pelagianism gave Augustine an opportunity of illustrating the doctrine of grace in the strongest manner. He himself was by no means forward and urgent in the work. Those, who have spoken of him as heated with the spirit of controversy, knew not Augustine*. He was rather slow and cautious in controversy, and so are all men of argumentative minds and humble dispositions. He was by no means at first so clear in his ideas of salvation being altogether of grace, as he afterwards was: particularly, that faith was altogether the gift of God, was not a proposition so clear to his mind, till deeper experience and more attentive search of the Scriptures confirmed him in the truth. When, in his inquiries after divine truth, he was led to see and to be fully convinced of the total apostasy of man; and when he reflected, that he himself was changed by effectual grace, not only without the co-operation, but even in spite of the resistance of his nature, he was gradually brought to acquiesce in St. Paul's views of predestination. It was a doctrine that, with him, followed experimental religion, as a shadow follows the substance; it was not embraced for its own sake. He wrote sparingly, however, upon it for a long time, content to give plain scripture testimonies, and fearful of involving the bulk of readers in inextricable labyrinths.

It is the impious boldness of heretics, avowedly opposing divine truths, because they are above their reason, which at length necessitates modest and cautious spirits to speak out more plainly concerning the

* Viz. Grotius.

deep truths of God, lest they should leave them to the insults of the enemy. In the further progress of the controversy, the most daring attempts were made to erase from men's minds all ideas of grace; and the specious attempts of Semi-Pelagianism in France seemed ready to overthrow the arguments of Augustine in the minds of many. The Eastern church, for the most part, more philosophical than the Western, was infected with those half views of grace; and, unless the bishop of Hippo meant by silence to give countenance to opinions, supported only by corrupt nature, reasoning pride, and the authority of some great names in the church, it behoved him to defend the doctrine of efficacious grace more explicitly. He did so at length, particularly in his latter writings*; he proves the truth from Scripture, appealing to its simple grammatical sense; and as the Antinomian contempt of the use of means appeared in some warm, but injudicious admirers of his doctrine, he states this matter also with his usual strength of argument and perspicuity, and shows the consistency between the exhortations and the decrees of God.

Another subject, of which the reader, versed in theological controversy, would wish to be informed, is, whether Augustine held "particular redemption." Very few words will suffice for this. He constantly connects the doctrine of grace with the influences of the Holy Spirit; I cannot find that he does so with the redemption of the Son of God. In one place, the text, "who would have all to be saved," is explained by him ambiguously and variously. But, in truth, whether Christ died only for the elect, or for all men, was never the object of his controversies; and certainly, in his practical dis-

* In the foregoing deduction I have attended to the progress of things, as they appear from the publication of Augustine's works at different times. To cite particular passages would be tedious; to those who read him for themselves needless, to those who do not uninteresting.

courses, he always represents the sacrifice of Christ as universal; so every preacher should do, if he means to profit his hearers. On occasion of the controversies, Augustine was objected to, as denying that Christ died for all. But Prosper, his admirer and follower, and as strict a predestinarian as any writer in any age, maintains that Augustine held, "that Christ gave himself a ransom for all." Doubtless the natural and obvious sense of Scripture is the same *, and the notion of particular redemption was unknown to the ancients, and I wish it had remained equally unknown to the moderns. But let us mention the peculiar excellence of his theology.

Humility is his theme. A man may hold the doctrines of grace in the clearest manner, yet himself be proud. He may not have a distinct view of some of them, particularly that of which we have been speaking, yet he may be humble; though without some real knowledge of grace it is impossible he should be so. But the true advantage of just and accurate Christian sentiments, is, that they teach humility. Am I obliged to support the doctrines of grace by such arguments as mere human reason, unassisted by revelation, could invent? No: I confess reason in this sense is beneath them; and if I be truly humble, I shall be content to bear the scorn of philosophers for the confession. Augustine taught men what it is to be humble before God. This he does every where with godly simplicity, with inexpressible seriousness. And in doing this no writer, uninspired, ever exceeded, I am apt to think ever equalled him, in any age. They wrong this father much, who view him as a mere controversialist. Practical godliness was his theme, and he constantly connects all his views of grace with humility †.

* See particularly 1 Tim. ii.

† This virtue ever appears conspicuous in Augustine, and perpetually checks the daring and adventurous spirit of investigation, which, as a man of genius and letters, formed a striking part of

Few writers have been equal to him in describing the internal conflict of flesh and spirit, mysterious but certain, ignorantly confounded by philosophers with the conflict between reason and passion, and misrepresented by the profane as enthusiastic. He describes this in a manner unknown to any but those who have deeply felt it; and the Pelagian pretensions to perfection oblige him to say more than otherwise would be needful, to prove that the most humble, and the most holy, have, through life, to combat with indwelling sin.

Two more practical subjects he delights to handle, charity * and heavenly-mindedness. In both he excels wonderfully, and I shall only wish young stu-

his character. In speaking of the difficulties attending the doctrine of original sin, he abhors every idea of attempting to solve them in an unscriptural manner. He chooses rather to be content with his ignorance. "Though I now desire, and beg earnestly of God that he will help me out of my ignorance by your means (he is writing to Jerom §); nevertheless, if I cannot obtain it, I will pray for patience; since we believe in him, with a promise never to murmur, though he doth not lead us into perfect knowledge of some particular things. I am ignorant of many things, more than I can enumerate."

* I do not remember to have seen a controversial writer of so charitable a spirit as Augustine, in matters of dispute. The proofs of this are endless. Take a single instance, and see how he treats an opponent. "If, in the heat of the dispute, an injurious word may have escaped him, I am willing to think it arose from the necessity of supporting his opinions, rather than from the design of offending me. For when I am a stranger to the temper of a man, I think it much better to have a good opinion of him, than to blame him too hastily. Perhaps he had a kind intention, designing to undeceive me. In that case I am obliged to him for his good will, though I am under a necessity of disapproving his sentiments ||."

His own practice which he mentions, deserves to be attended to by all controversialists: "When I answer any person in speaking or writing, though provoked by contumelious language, so far as the Lord affords to me, I bridle myself, and restrain the spurs of vain indignation; I consult for the hearer or reader, and thus endeavour not to be superior to another in railing, but to be more salutary by convincing him of his error. B. 3. against Petilian.

ments in divinity to convince themselves of this by reading him. A reference of all things to a future life, and the depth of humble love, appear in all his writings; as in truth, from the moment of his conversion, they influenced all his practice. For he never seems to have lost his first love. Hence there is manifest in his works a singular innocence of spirit. No pride, no self-conceit, no bitterness, ever discover themselves in any expression. Calm, equable, modest, cautious of offending, never pathetic, except when roused by zealous love of God and his neighbour; these are the lights in which he constantly exhibits himself. The times were highly unfavourable, the defects of superstition often cloud his writings; yet, at intervals, he vigorously struggles against it, and in one passage particularly laments the growing servilities, the straining at a gnat, and the swallowing of a camel, owning that he conformed, through love of peace and charity, to some things.

His own words well deserve to be quoted, as they evidence the power of good sense and divine grace united in withstanding the prevailing torrent. "I * cannot approve the new practices introduced almost with as much solemnity as sacraments; neither dare I censure them too freely, lest I should give offence to any one; but it grieves me, that so many salutary precepts of Scripture should be held cheap, while our religion abounds with commandments of mere men.—Therefore, as to all those customs which are not contained in the Scripture, ordained by councils, or sanctioned by the tradition of the church, and which do not carry in their appearance an evident reason for their existence, I am free to say, they ought to be laid aside. Admit, it cannot be proved, that they are contrary to the faith; yet they burden religion with servile usages, which God, in his mercy, intended to make free: in this respect

* Ep. to Januarius, 119.

the condition of the Jews is more tolerable ; they are subject indeed, but to divine ordinances, not to the precepts of men. However, the Church, surrounded as she is with chaff and tares, endures many things, yet she cannot tolerate what is contrary to Christian faith and practice." He particularly condemns the custom of divining by the Gospel, and of managing temporal concerns according to words which strike the eye at the first opening of the book.

His conduct toward the Donatists bids the fairest for reprehension ; but he acted sincerely : you differ with him in judgment, but it is impossible for you to blame his temper and spirit, if you read him candidly. He carefully checks his people for calumniating the Donatists, and is constantly employed in moderating and healing.

Finally, in Ethics he is superior to most. On the subject of veracity and of faithfulness to oaths, and in general in the practice of justice, in the love of mercy, and in walking humbly with his God, as he wrote most admirably, so he practised most sincerely.

C H A P. X.

Jerom born,
A. D.
331.

THIS renowned monk was born at Stridon, a town in the confines of Dalmatia and Pannonia, under the emperor Constantine, in the year 331. The place was obscure, and was rendered still more so by the desolations of the Goths. Nor is it a very clear case whether it ought to be looked on as part of Italy or not*. That Jerom was of a liberal and opulent family, appears from the pains taken with his education, which was finished at Rome, that he

* Erasm. Life of Jerom, prefixed to his works.

might there acquire the graces of Latinity. He was in truth the most learned of the Roman fathers, and was eminent both for genius and industry. He was brought up in Christianity from infancy, and hence, like other good men, who have had the same advantages, he appears never to have known the extreme conflicts with indwelling sin, which, to later converts, have given so much pain, and often have rendered them more eminently acquainted with vital religion.

After his baptism at Rome, he travelled into France, in company with Bonosus, a fellow-student. He examined libraries, and collected information from all quarters; and, returning into Italy, he determined to follow the profession of a monk: a term, which did not, at that time, convey the modern idea of the word. In Jerom's time, it meant chiefly the life of a private recluse Christian, who yet was fettered by no certain rules nor vows, but acted according to his own pleasure. Such a life suited the disposition of a studious person like Jerom. He was, however, made a presbyter of the church, but never would proceed any further in ecclesiastical dignity. He spent four years in the deserts of Syria, reading and studying with immense industry. A commentary on the prophet Obadiah, which he published, bore strong marks of juvenile indiscretion, as he afterwards frankly owned. And here, by the assistance of a Jew, who visited him, Nicodemus-like, in the evenings, lest he should give umbrage to his brethren, he acquired the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, and with indefatigable labour he studied also the Chaldee and the Syriac.

On his return to Rome, he became intimate with Paula, the illustrious descendant of the Pauls, so famous in Roman story, with Marcella, and other opulent ladies. The monastic life, which had long flourished in the East, was only beginning to be fashionable in the West. The renowned Athana-

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH :

sius, and his Egyptian friends, rendered respectable, during their exile at Rome, by their sufferings for the faith, contributed to throw a dignity on such a course of life : and the zeal of Jerom nursed the same spirit among serious persons. The ladies I have mentioned, were hence induced to impart a celebrity to the monastic taste by their own example.

Paula, her daughter Eustochium, her son-in-law Pammaghius, Marcella, and others, admired and revered Jerom ; and he, whose temper was choleric and imperious to a great degree, seems to have lived in much harmony with females, probably because he more easily gained submission from them than from persons of his own sex.

Spleen, and calumny hastened the departure of Jerom from Rome. This great man had not learned to command his passions, and to disregard the breath of fame. Unjust aspersions on his character affected him with a very blameable acrimony. He retired again to the East : there several of his admirers followed him. He chose Bethlahem as the seat of his old age, where Paula erected four monasteries, three for the women, over which she presided, and one for the men, in which Jerom lived the rest of his life, enjoying at times the society of his learned friends. He instructed the women also in theology, and Paula died, after having lived twenty years in the monastery.

Jerom dies
at the age
of 91,

A. D.

420.

I shall not spend any time in vindicating the chastity of Jerom, because his whole life was a sufficient answer to calumny in that respect. He was certainly serious in the very best sense of the word, and died in the 91st year of his age, in the year 420.

Yet it is to be lamented, that a man of so great sincerity, and of a mind so vigorous, should have been of so little service to mankind. The truth is, his knowledge of theology was contracted and low.

He confessed, that while he macerated his body in the deserts, he was thinking of the pleasures and

delights of Rome. He understood not the true Gospel-mystery of mortifying sin, and, by his voluntary humility and neglect of the body, added to the fame and splendour of his voluminous but ill-digested learning, he contributed more than any other person of antiquity to the growth of superstition. His quarrel with Ruffinus is a reproach to both their memories. Yet, of the two, Jerom seems to have been more evangelical in his views; because Origen was erroneous in his doctrines: and it is a sufficient account of so uninteresting a controversy to say, that Ruffinus defended, Jerom accused, Origen.

For the view of his controversy with Augustine, I must refer the reader to the accounts of that Father of the Church.

Jerom was, however, humble before God, and truly pious: and of him it must be said, to the honour of Christian godliness, how much worse a man he would have been had he not known Christ Jesus, and how much better if he had known him with more clearness and perspicuity!

His works of a writer so superstitious, though sound in the essentials of Christianity, will not deserve a very particular review. Here and there a vigorous and evangelical sentiment breaks out amidst the clouds. His epistles discover him to have been sincere and heavenly minded, though his temper was choleric. In a letter to Nepotian* there are various rules worthy the attention of Pastors, concerning the contempt of riches, the avoiding of secular familiarities, and the regulation of external conduct. One observation will deserve to be distinctly remembered: "A clergyman easily subjects himself to contempt who never represses invitations to dinner, however frequent."

He wrote an epitaph upon the death of this same Nepotian some time after †, eloquent, pious, pathetic.

Jerom's
epitaph on
the death of
Nepotian.

* Paris Edit. vol. i. 6 G.

† Id. 8 D.

In this he confesses the doctrine of original sin; and celebrates the victory of Christ over death. He makes an excellent use of the public miseries of the times, by recommending more strongly a practical attention to piety. Hence, also, he makes the best apology which could be invented for his favourite solitude.

His letter to Rusticus.

In his letter * to Rusticus the monk, the learned reader, who would see a practical comment on St. Paul's cautions against voluntary humility in the Epistle to the Colossians, may behold it in Jerom. He abounds in self-devised ways of obtaining holiness, while the true way of humble faith in Jesus is not despised indeed, but little attended to.

Another letter to Florentina.

A short letter to Florentius shows genuine humility and acquiescence in Christ, as his sole hope, after all his austerities. He calls himself a polluted sinner altogether; "yet, because the Lord sets free the captives, and looks to the humble and the contrite, perhaps he may say to me also, lying in the grave of wickedness, Jerom, come forth." It was this humble faith in Christ, which checked the impetuosity and arrogance of his natural temper, repressed his vain-glory, and in some degree changed a lion into a lamb. For Jerom, though exactly formed by constitution and habit, to sustain the character of a Pharisee, was too deeply conscious of internal pollution to be one in reality.

Toxotius, the son of Paula, had married Læta, by whom he had a daughter, whom the grandmother destined to virginity. Jerom writes to the mother†, advising, that the child be sent to Bethlehem, when grown up, and promising himself to superintend her education. At present he gives rules for her education, while an infant, which are useful, but mixed with superstition. Læta's father, it seems, was a Pagan. Jerom, however, despairs not of his conversion: "All things, he says, are possible, with

God. Conversion is never too late. The thief from the cross passed into Paradise. Despair not of your Father's salvation. A relation of yours, Gracchus, whose very name is expressive of patrician nobility, a few years ago broke in pieces and burnt the images of idolatry, and received the faith of Christ." Behold the spirit of meekness and charity adorning one of the most rugged tempers in the world, and admire the effect of victorious grace in Jerom.

His letter to Gracchus

I am disgusted with the repeated lessons of superstition with which his epistles present us. He knew, however, better things. In a letter to his Paula, he rebuked her immoderate sorrow for the death of her daughter Blesilla, in strains at once evangelical and tender*. In a letter to Pammachius †, who became a monk after the decease of his wife Paulina, the daughter of Paula, he speaks with holy rapture on the love of Christ, according to the ideas of the book of Canticles: "Whether you read or write, or watch or sleep, let love always sound a trumpet in your ears; let this trumpet excite your soul; overpowered with this love, seek in your bed Him whom your soul loveth." How much is it to be regretted, that Jerom and his friends should have so hidden their talent; that persons who loved Christ sincerely had not learned, like the Apostles and first Christians, to profess him in the most public walks of society, and by preaching and conversation to have instructed mankind in general! But such conduct would have required a self-denial and a charity larger and of a more sublime nature than theirs; to live in the world, and yet remain separate from it, shows a divine strength indeed.

Jerom writes to Paula.

Another letter to Pammachius

Jerom confesses, that Gregory Nazianzen was his preceptor in theological expositions ‡. The Eastern mode, thus caught by Jerom, and pursued by a mind eager, and adorned with learning and eloquence, became highly respected in the West.

* 57 G. † 59 G. ‡ 106 D.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH:

Jerom, as a theologian, seems greatly inferior to his contemporary, Augustine; though in style and diction superior.

In the foregoing century, Jovinian, an Italian monk, taught, first at Rome, and afterwards at Milan, some points of doctrine directly opposite to the growing superstitions. It is not easy to state, with confidence, either the character or the sentiments of the man. His works are lost. The most celebrated teachers of the Church opposed him vehemently. Ambrose, Jerom, and Augustine, joined their testimonies against him. The last, indeed, wrote very little, and that little from popular rumour, rather than from any distinct knowledge of the subject; for the weight of popular prejudice overwhelmed Jovinian speedily, so that his doctrines could never enter Africa, nor give the bishop of Hippo an opportunity of knowing him. Had this been the case, I should have expected, from his candour and judgment, that fair and distinct delineation of Jovinian, which we seek in vain from the choleric and prejudiced Jerom. We have of the latter two books against Jovinian*, intemperate, fierce, and ill-supported by Scripture or argument. I have endeavoured, as well as I can, to discover what were his real opinions†; but, in wading through the torrent of Jerom's abuse, I find no very certain vestiges; such is the violence and intemperance of his spirit and language. One single quotation is all that I can discover, which can be called Jovinian's own, the language of which is barbarous in the extreme, and justifies Jerom's censure upon him in one respect, as a man void of all classical culture and elegance. The sense of it‡ seems

* Tom. vi. 7. D.

† Whatever they were, he was condemned in a council, held by Ambrose at Milan, as an heretic, and was, by the emperor Honorius, banished to the island Boa.

‡ 8 G.

to be this: "Having satisfied those who were invited to hear me, not for the sake of my glory, but that I may deliver myself from unjust accusations, I sow my field, and visit the new plantations, the tender shrubs, delivered from the whirlpools of vices, fortified by troops. For we know the Church, through hope, faith, and charity, inaccessible, invincible. In her there are none immature, every one is teachable; none can subdue her by violence, or elude her by art." I admire the positiveness of Mosheim in deciding so peremptorily for the character of a man, of whose writings nothing has come down to us, but a single sentence so barbarous and doubtful. Certainly he opposed the prejudices in favour of celibacy and fasting. A monk himself, he disclaimed any superior dignity or estimation, on account of his abstinence from matrimony; nor did he think that fasting added any intrinsic excellence to a character. Thus far is certain: and that he saw so much truth in such an age, proves him doubtless to have been a man of strong sense and manly understanding. But before I dare call him "a worthy opposer of the reigning superstitions," I ought to know his motives. He might be influenced by the pure love of God, the faith of Jesus, and unfeigned humility. He might be moved by a spirit merely prudential, worldly, and even profane. For true Christians and Deists will unite in opposing superstition, from motives very opposite. We are, indeed, always strongly inclined to think well of those persons in past ages, who happened to favour our peculiar sentiments or prejudices; and, on the contrary, we are apt to judge harshly of those who thought in a different manner. Does this propensity account for Mosheim's hasty approbation of the character of Jovinian? Whether it does or not in this instance, I cannot but observe, that this sort of mental

Mosheim censured.

* Mosheim, Cent. iv. c. iii. 22.

CHAP.
II.

The four
propositions
of Jovinian.

imbecility forms one of the most capital defects of that ecclesiastical historian : As to myself, I can only say, I endeavour to guard against it.

Let us hear, however, what are the four propositions of Jovinian. I wish I could give them in his own words, instead of those of his adversary. The first is, that virgins, widows, and married women, who have once been washed in Christ, if in other works they differ not, are of the same excellence. Secondly, he endeavours to prove, that those who have been regenerated cannot be subverted by the devil. The third shows, that there is no distinction in the sight of God, between those who abstain from meats, and those who receive them with thanksgiving. The fourth, that all who keep their baptism shall be equally rewarded in the kingdom of heaven.

Brief ac-
count of
Jovinian's
Vigilance

From information so scanty, two very opposite opinions may be deduced : first, that Jovinian, blest with divine illumination, and the faith of God's elect, entered fully into the spirit of apostolical Christianity; condemned the self-righteous taste of the times in ascribing merit to extrinsic excellence, to fasting, and celibacy ; recommended them only as external helps of godliness in certain cases ; placed all the hope of salvation on the grace of Jesus in unfeigned faith and humility ; asserted the perpetuity of this grace in the elect ; and while he reprobated the fictitious virtues of proud men, was zealous for the glory of God and his Christ. Whether this was Jovinian's view or not, it undoubtedly was that of the apostles. If it was his, he was no heretic, as he has been represented, but a faithful confessor of Christ. That which strongly inclines me to hope, on the whole, that this was his real character, and that even good men of his age were deceived concerning him, is the soundness with which he interprets Scripture in the few instances to be collected from Jerom's confused account. He observes that

those who fell were only baptized with water, not with the Holy Ghost, as appears from the case of Simon Magus, showing from St. John, that he who is born of God doth not commit sin. He mentions the presence of Jesus at the marriage of Cana, in support of his vindication of matrimony; to which Jerom returns an answer too ridiculous to deserve mentioning. There are other things in Jerom's opposition, weak beyond measure, and which show that sound argumentation was not the talent of this celebrated Father.

If, on the other hand, Jovinian's opposition to the fashionable austerities sprang from the love of the world; if he held that all sins were really equal, and that the devil had no power at all to draw the regenerate into sin, he might be a Stoic, an Epicurean, an Antinomian; a character very remote from that of a Christian. A little clear information of Jovinian's own life, and even a larger specimen of his writings, might have solved this doubt.

About the beginning of this century, Vigilantius, a presbyter, a man remarkable for eloquence, who was born in Gaul, and afterwards, performed his ecclesiastical functions in Spain, treading in the steps of Jovinian, exhorted and wrote with much energy against the custom of performing vigils in temples consecrated to martyrs, and against the whole apparatus of pilgrimages, relics, addresses to saints, voluntary poverty, and the like. I have here to regret, as in the former instance, the want of materials for estimating the character of this man, whom Mosheim scruples not to call the good Vigilantius*. He quotes indeed Bayle's dictionary; whence I gather, that the presbyter before us was agreeable to that self-conceited sceptic; but the ambiguity remains unremoved. He might oppose superstition from the faith and love of Christ, or from profaneness and sensuality. As no specific blot, however,

The first
proposition
is a truism

Brief ac-
count of
Vigilantius.

* Mosheim, Cent. v. c. lii. 14.

is affixed to the moral characters of Jovinian and Vigilantius, amidst an intemperate effusion of satire, the probability is, on the whole, that they were pious men, and deserved to be ranked in a very different class from that of heretics.

Jerom wrote apologies for his books against Jovinian*, which gave additional strength to the charges of asperity justly brought against him by many. His commendation of rhetoric is excessive, and his vain-glory odious, though it seems unknown to himself. The best instruction to be collected from them is, to see how the defect of Christian principle fails not to appear in the defect of humility, meekness, and love. Augustine and Jerom, in principles and practice, form in this respect a strong contrast. The pieces against Vigilantius deserve the same censure. He absurdly gives to saints a sort of omnipresence and intercessory power.

I have said already, that the contest between Jerom and Ruffinus is uninteresting. It is a deplorable evidence of the weakness and corruption of human nature, even in men constantly engaged in religious studies ! A sincere and practical attention to the real peculiarities of the Gospel, can alone secure the genuine holiness of professors, and mortify the whole body of sin. When Jerom is calm and unruffled, and looks to Jesus Christ in faith and love, he seems quite another man from what he is when engaged in controversy. For a single page of Jovinian or Vigilantius, I would gladly give up the whole invectives of Jerom and Ruffinus.

It is remarkable, that Jerom confesses the vast obscurity of the whole Epistle to the Romans †. To one who studied so much, and whose mind was so clouded with self-righteous superstitions, it must appear in that light. He evidently speaks as one irresolute, embarrassed, and confused. His immensity of verbal learning, in which he much excelled

* 37 D. 43 D. 44 G.

† 58 D. Tom. ult. of vol. i.

Augustine, was not combined with that lumber and per-
spicuity, and comprehensive judgment of doctrine,
which enabled the latter to see his way through sub-
terranean mazes, and to find order and beauty, where the
former beheld inextricable confusion. Such is the
difference between divine and human teaching!

Hence Jerom, in his very voluminous exposit-
ions*, speaks at random; is allegorical beyond all
bounds; and almost always without accuracy and
precision; lowers the doctrine of illumination in
1 Cor. ii. to things merely moral and practical; hints
at something like a first and second justification before
God; asserts predestination, and, as it were, retracts
it; owns a good will as from God in one place, in
another supposes a power to choose to be or not to be
of divine grace; never opposes fundamental truths
deliberately, but though he owns them everywhere,
always does so defectively, and often inconsistently.
It must be confessed, the reputation of this father's
knowledge and abilities has been much over-rated.
There is a splendor in a profusion of ill-digested
learning, coloured by a lively imagination, which
is often mistaken for sublimity of genius. This
was Jerom's case; but this was not the greatest part
of the evil. His learned ignorance availed, more
than any other cause, to give a celebrity to supersti-
tion in the Christian world, and to darken the light
of the Gospel. Yet, when he was unruffled by con-
tradiction, and engaged in meditations unconnected
with superstition, he could speak with Christian
affection concerning the characters and offices of the
Son of God.

It was a marvellous effect of Divine Providence,
that while all other truths were more or less clouded,
that which relates to the person of the Son of God,
on whom rests the salvation of men, should re-
main unsullied. From St. John's days to Jerom
we have seen the whole church unanimous in its

* Vol. ii. throughout.

comprehensive view of the Godhead and manhood of the divine Saviour: whoever opposed either, could never obtain the free sanction of the church. Imperial violence was ever found necessary to extort the admission of such persons into the church as pastors. This essential article of Christianity seems even to have been studied with the minutest accuracy; and few perhaps, even of the best modern divines, have attained the precision of the ancients. Heresiarchs have not failed to take advantage of this circumstance, and the narrow and imperfect conceptions, which some authors have formed of the person of Jesus Christ have emboldened them to suppose, that the assertion of the manhood enervates the proof of the Godhead. Inferiority to the Father, confessed in any light, seems to startle many minds unaccustomed to the generous and extensive habits of thinking, in which the fathers excelled on this subject; while yet the answer is so easy to all supposed difficulties of this nature; “equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood *.”

CHAP. XI.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE WEST.

It is time to take up the connected thread of history again. But the reader must not expect a successive detail of the proceedings of the Roman princes. After the death of Theodosius, the empire was torn by various convulsions, tending, in the West particularly, to its destruction. It is my duty to watch only the real Church amidst these scenes; for she lived, while the secular glory of Rome was destroyed. Honorius, the son of Theodosius, reigned there, while his brother Arcadius governed at Constantinople.

* Athanasian Creed.

Honorius, or to speak more properly, his ministers, (for he himself was, like Arcadius, a very feeble prince,) protected the external state of the church, and followed the steps of Theodosius in extirpating the remains of idolatry, and in supporting orthodoxy, against the Donatists, and all heretics. The superior advantages of a Christian above a Pagan establishment, even in times of such decline as the present were, appear in the humanity of a number of laws and edicts, by which idolatrous impurities and savage games were abolished, and due care was taken of the needy and the miserable. In what, for instance, but in a Christian government, shall we find so humane a law as that of Honorius, enacted in the year 409, by which judges are directed to take prisoners out of prison every Sunday, and to inquire if they be provided with necessaries, and to see that they be properly accommodated in all things?

Humane
law of
Honorius,
A. .D
409.

In this reign, Rome was sacked by the Goths; and an opportunity was given for the exercise of many Christian virtues, by the sufferings to which its inhabitants were exposed. But enough has been said of this subject, in the review of Augustine's City of God.

Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, was one of the greatest ornaments of Gaul in this century. He was a person of quality, and exercised the profession of a counsellor in the former part of his life. Amator*, his predecessor in the See, foresaw however, I apprehend, some symptoms of grace in him, and ordained him deacon. A month after the decease of Amator he was unanimously elected bishop by the clergy, nobility, citizens, and peasants, and was forced to accept the office notwithstanding the great

* He foresaw these, by the observation which he made of the frame of his spirit, rather than by any special revelation. From various places in Fleury I have collected this short account of Germanus, and, stripping it of the marvellous have retained only the credible.

HISTORY OF

reluctance which he discovered. He employed himself in the foundation of monasteries, and in enriching the church, while he impoverished himself; and for thirty years, from his ordination to his death, he lived in extreme austerity.

About the year 430, that is, about the time of Augustine's death, he visited the island of Great Britain, with an intention to oppose Agricola, the son of a Pelagian bishop called Severinus, who propagated heresy among the churches there. Hence it is probable, that Pelagius, after he had ceased to be famous in the world, had retired into his native country, and there died. It is no wonder that his opinions should there find abettors. Lupus, bishop of Troyes, accompanied Germanus in the mission, which was undertaken on the recommendation of a numerous council in Gaul. Lupus governed his church fifty-two years, and was highly renowned for sanctity. These two bishops, on their arrival, preached not only in the churches, but also in the highways, and in the open country, and vast crowds attended their ministry. The Pelagians came to a conference; the doctrines of grace were debated; the bishops, supporting themselves by express passages of Scripture in the hearing of all the people, were allowed to be victorious, and Pelagianism was reduced to silence. At this time, the Picts, a race of barbarians who inhabited the north, and the Saxons, a German nation, called in by the Britons, as it is well known, to assist them against the Picts, united their forces against the natives. The latter, terrified at the approach of the enemy, had recourse to Germanus and Lupus. Many, having been instructed by them, desired baptism; and a great part of the army received it at Easter, in a church which they made of boughs * of trees twisted together. The festival being over, they marched against the enemy, with Germanus at their head. He, still

* Beda, 1 Hist.

remembering the profession in which he had spent great part of his youth, posted his men in a valley through which the enemy were to pass, surprised, and defeated them. After these things the two bishops returned to the Continent. The deacon Palladius being ordained bishop of Scotland, arrived there in the year 431. Scotland had never before seen a bishop, and was in a state of extreme barbarism.

Palladius
ordained
bishop
Scotland

The same year died Paulinus of Nola, who had been bishop there twenty years. He was the intimate friend of Augustine, and appears, through the mist of superstition which clouds his narrative, to have been one of the best Christians of the age. He was a mirror of piety, liberality and humility, worthy of a more intelligent age, and of more intelligent writers than those, who have recorded his life. For I choose to dismiss him with this general character, rather than to tarnish his memory with repeating the romances of those who meant to honour him.

Paulinus
bishop
Nola

A.

43

We have seen how the doctrines of grace were defended in Britain, and it is not to be doubted, but this was done with some saving efficacy. In Gaul, the doctrine of Semi-Pelagianism still maintained its ground, and Prosper and Hilary, who had written an account of it to Augustine, exerted themselves in defending the doctrines which he had taught. Cœlestine, of Rome, supported the same cause; and in the same year he published nine articles, which will deserve some consideration, as they show that the spark of truth was still alive amidst the mass of corruption in the Western Church, and still, under God, preserved some degree of Christian holiness. In these articles, it is owned that all men are, by nature, under the power of sin, by reason of the fall, from which nothing but grace can deliver any man—that man is not good of himself; he needs a communication of God to him from God himself—nor

IX A
of faith
published
by Cœlestine,

A.

34

can a man, though renewed, overcome the flesh and the devil, except he receive daily assistance—that God so worketh upon the hearts of men, that holy thoughts, pious intentions, and the least motion toward a good inclination, proceed from God. “We learn also, says Coelestine, what we are to believe, from the prayers appointed by the Apostles through the world, and observed with uniformity through the whole church; wherein it is petitioned, that faith may be granted to infidels, idolaters, Jews, and heretics; charity to schismatics, repentance to sinners, and regeneration to catechumens. These prayers are not empty forms; their effects are visible in the conversion of many, for which thanks are returned to God. We must confess, that the grace of God prevents the merits of man; that it doth not take away free-will, but delivers, enlightens, rectifies, and heals it. God is willing, such is his goodness, that his gifts should be our merits, and grants an eternal reward to them: he works in us to will and to do according to his pleasure; but his gifts are not idle in us; we co-operate with his grace, and, if we find remissness proceeding from our weakness, we immediately have recourse to him. As to the more difficult questions which have been discussed at large, we do not despise them, but need not treat of them. Suffice it that we have declared what we believe essential to the faith*.”

Thus vigorously and perspicuously did a bishop of Rome maintain the apostolic doctrines, and so strong was the light which, in an age of superstition, had beamed forth from the writings of Augustine. I could not resist the pleasure of adding so valuable a testimony of the continuation of Christian Faith in the West.

The labours
of Patrick.

Palladius, the pastor of Scotland, being dead, Coelestine sent Patrick into the same parts in his stead. He was born in Scotland†, at a place now

* Fleury, c. xii. 26.

† Fleury, B. xxvi. 13.

called Dunbarton. Having been carried captive into Ireland, and having remained there a few years, in which time he learnt the language and customs of the country, he was by some pirates afterwards conveyed into Gaul; and after various adventures he returned a volunteer into Ireland, with a view to undertake the conversion of the barbarous natives, who seem, till this time, to have been without any acquaintance with Christianity. It is delightful to observe the motions of Providence, in causing the confusions of war and desolation to be subservient to the propagation of the Gospel. Patrick, intent only on the cause of Christ, amidst all the various scenes in which he was tossed to and fro, was not discouraged by the ill success which at first attended his labours. The barbarous Irish refused to hear him, and he returned into Gaul, and spent some time with Germanus, of Auxerre, whose services in Britain have been mentioned. The conversation and example of Germanus inflamed his mind with fresh zeal, and by his advice he went to Rome; that he might be strengthened in his pious views by the authority of Cœlestine. From this bishop he received such support and assistance as enabled him to revisit Ireland; and at length his success was so great, that to this day he is looked on as the apostle of Ireland. He first taught the Irish the use of letters; and while we pass over in silence the fictions of which these ages are full, there is no reason to doubt but that he was the instrument of real good to the Irish, both with respect to this life and the next; nor ought such events to be omitted in the History of the Church of Christ. It were only to be wished, that we knew them more circumstantially. He died about the year 460, in an advanced age.

Patrick
dies,
A.D. 460.

In the mean time the clergy of Marseilles, who, in the latter times of the Pelagian controversy, with Cassian at their head, had endeavoured to chalk out a middle path between Augustine and Pelagius,

CHAP.
XL.Semi-Pe-
lagianism
supported
by Cassian.

propagated Semi-Pelagianism with success, notwithstanding the strenuous endeavours of Coelestine of Rome. Nor ought we to be surprised at this: the doctrine of Semi-Pelagianism strongly recommends itself to the depraved taste of mankind; it divides the work of salvation between free grace and human ability in such a manner, that it both retains a specious appearance of humility toward God, and at the same time flatters the pride of man. Fallen creatures cannot but feel weakness and ignorance in some degree; and therefore they do not easily believe themselves perfectly sufficient for their own salvation; yet they love independence, and struggle to preserve it; and hence it is, that Semi-Pelagian notions are so peculiarly grateful to the nature of corrupt man. But it may be observed, that this very circumstance itself forms an insuperable objection to their truth. That can never be the wisdom of God in a mystery*, which men in their natural state so readily and cordially approve. Prosper still continued, with the arms of Scripture, to oppose the opinions of Cassian, and to defend the doctrines of the grace of God; Marius Mercator also laboured in the same cause. Gaul and the neighbouring countries no doubt received benefit from their endeavours. Semi-Pelagianism was so far checked, that during the dark ages after this time, the doctrines of grace were cordially received by godly persons, particularly in the monasteries. All, who were thoroughly humbled and contrite, found the comfort of them; while those monks, whose religion was pharisaic, found the Semi-Pelagian scheme to suit their self-righteous pride †. In this manner were religious men in the West divided: Cassian's authority prevailed the

* 1 Cor. ii 7.

† Though this must have been the case for the most part, yet exceptions will occur in the course of this history. There were those whose hearts were better taught than their understandings.

more, because of the serious and devout spirit which other parts of his writings possessed, or seemed to possess * ; but, as the times grew more corrupt in practice, Semi-Pelagianism gained the ascendant.

About the year 439, Genseric, king of the Vandals, surprised Carthage † in the midst of peace, and used his victory with great cruelty. He himself was an Arian by profession, as the barbarous nations who had received Christianity generally were. How this happened, we have seen before. It does not appear that the Arians were altered in their dispositions. The same unprincipled wickedness, which had ever characterized that party, remained. Genseric showed the greatest malice against the clergy; drove a number of them from their churches, and martyred many. Indeed the abominations of the times seemed to call for such a scourge. The light of divine grace revived in the West, purified many souls, and fitted them for sufferings; but with the majority, both superstition and practical wickedness increased. Carthage itself was sunk in vice; lewdness was amazingly predominant. So deplorable a thing is it for men to depart from the simplicity of Christian faith! The superstitions now increasing daily, only fortified them the more in self-righteousness; and natural depravity, while grace was neglected, grew to an enormous height. Oppression and cruelty domineered at Carthage; and the poor of the place, in the anguish of their misery, were induced to beseech God to deliver the city to the Barbarians ‡.

Genseric
the Vandal
surprises
Carthage,
A. D.
439.

* I speak ambiguously, because I have no access to Cassian, except indirectly by the short account of Du Pin. I scarcely need to say, after the accounts I have given of good men before his time, that notwithstanding the views of Prosper appear to me more humble, and holy, and consistently scriptural, yet there might be and there were real good men, on the Semi-Pelagian scheme: for it ought not to be confounded with Pelagianism itself: the theory of this excludes the very idea of grace.

† Victor Vitens, B. i.

‡ The account of a council held at Braga, in Lusitania ||, will
|| Fleury, B. xxiii. 6.

He who informs us of these things is Salvian, priest of Marseilles*. From him we learn, that

both illustrate the melancholy situation of civil affairs in this century (for in the former part of it the council seems to have been held) and will also throw some light on the state of religion in Portugal, a country which has hitherto furnished us with no memoirs. The bishop Pancratian, being president, said, Ye see brethren, the havoc made by the Barbarians. Brethren, let our care be for the salvation of souls, fearing lest the miseries of the times should seduce our flocks into the way of sinners; and therefore let us give them an example of suffering in our own persons for Jesus Christ, who suffered so much for us. And as some of the Barbarians are Arians, others idolaters, let us confess our faith. He then declared in few words the articles of Christian confession, to which they all assented. Elipand, of Conimbra, said, The Barbarians are among us; they besiege Lisbon, in a little time they will be upon us. Let every one go to his abode; let him comfort the faithful, decently conceal the bodies of the saints, and send us an account of the caves where they are deposited. All the bishops having approved of the motion; Pancratian added, Go home in peace, except brother Potamius, because his church at Æminium is destroyed, and his country ravaged. Potamius generously answered, I did not receive the episcopal function to sit at my ease, but to labour; let me comfort my flock, and suffer with them for Jesus Christ. You have well spoken, replied the president, God be with you. God maintain you in your resolution, said all the bishops. Let us depart with the peace of Jesus Christ.

At this council ten bishops subscribed to the decrees. Arisbert of Porto, (I suppose the present Oporto), wrote to a friend, a little after the council, in these affecting terms: I pity you, brother—may God look on our misery with the eyes of his mercy. Conimbra is taken, the servants of God are fallen by the edge of the sword. Elipand (one of the bishops of the council) is carried away captive; Lisbon has redeemed itself with gold. Igædita is besieged; nothing to be seen but misery, groaning, and anguish. You have seen what the Suevi have done in Galicia; judge what the Alani are doing in Lusitania. I send you the decrees of the faith you ask for; I will send you all, if I discover the place where you are hidden. I expect the same fate daily. The Lord have mercy on us.

The sympathizing reader, who enjoys at his ease the civil and religious privileges of our country, will do well to consider how thankful he ought to be for blessings, of which these pious men were deprived.

* Salvian de Gubern. B. 7.

many nominal Christians attended Pagan sacrifices and afterwards went to the Lord's Supper. Lewdness was so common among them, that after the Vandals became masters of Carthage, they put a stop to the disorders, and obliged the prostitutes to marry. For these Barbarians had not yet attained the corrupt refinements of Roman luxury. Salvian very justly observes, that the miseries of these orthodox Christians ought to give no offence, because they were only Christians in name. They were in reality very idolatrous in their practices, and even amidst the horrors of war and public calamities, continued impure and voluptuous. And oppression and injustice were so grievous, that the dominion of the Barbarians was really more tolerable than that of the Romans. It was worth while to mention these things, as containing no improper illustration of the adorable justice of Providence, in punishing the wickedness of nominal Christians, not only at Carthage, but in general in this century through the Western empire. What happened to the ancient Jewish Church when grown wicked and idolatrous, and retaining only the form of religion, happens also to Christian nations. God is glorified by taking the power out of their hand, that they may no longer profane his holy name.

Genseric expelled the bishops from their Sees; and in case of any resistance, he made them slaves for life; and this punishment was actually inflicted on several bishops, and on many laymen of quality. Quod vult Deus, bishop of Carthage, and a number of clergy, were expelled, and they fled by sea to Naples. Others having suffered divers torments in Africa were put on board an old bark, and landed in Campania. Arian bishops were now put into possession of the vacant Sees*. Some bishops, who still remained in the provinces, presented themselves before Genseric, and entreated, that as they had lost their churches

* Victor Vitens, B. i.

and their wealth, they might at least be allowed to remain without molestation in Africa, for the comfort and support of the people of God. "I have resolved to leave none of your name or nation," was the reply of the stern Barbarian; and it was with difficulty that he was withheld, by the entreaties of those about him, from ordering them to be thrown into the sea.

Yet, amidst the decline of Roman greatness, the growth of idolatrous superstition, and the horrors of the times, it is pleasing to see the improvements of human society through the influence of Christianity, corrupted and imperfect as it then was. I have before noticed the extinction of the savage games and sports of the Romans. Of a piece with this was the abolition of the barbarous custom of exposing children, a custom which had continued amidst all the grandeur of Rome. Constantine, in the year 331, had made a decree to obviate it; so had Honorius in the year 412. Still, however, those who took care of the children were molested. And now in the year 442, in a council held at Vaison*, it was ordained, that on Sunday the deacon shall give notice at the altar, that an exposed child hath been taken up, and that if any will claim it, he may do so within ten days; otherwise that he who shall afterwards claim such a child, shall have the church-censure of Homicide denounced against him.

In the year 443 Genseric passed over into Sicily, and so far as his arms prevailed, extended the persecution of the church into that island.

Germanus, of Auxerre, was called a second time into Great Britain, to assist the church against the Pelagian heresy, which again spread itself there. He set out in the year 446, and baffled the attempts of those who disturbed the faith of the Romans. The authority of this person was exceedingly great in these times, and it must be confessed that he em-

Decrees
against the
custom of
exposing
children,
1st in 331.
2dly in 412.
3dly in 442.

Genseric
persecutes
the church
in Sicily,
A. D. 443.

Germanus
of Auxerre
supports
the church
in Great
Britain
against the
Pelagians.

* Fleury, B. xxvi. 52.

ployed it to the best purposes, the propagation of Christian doctrine, and the benefit of human society. But I am inclined neither to credit nor to relate his miracles; and I am sorry that I have little else to tell the reader concerning him. He died in the year 448, having held the See of Auxerre thirty years.

Germanus
dies,

A. D.
448.

Attila, the Hun, now made terrible ravages in various parts of the empire; yet, such is the ascendant which religion, supported by any tolerable decorum of manners, must ever maintain over ignorant barbarism, that his respect for it, in some measure, had already checked his progress in Gaul; and an embassy of Leo, bishop of Rome, from the emperor of the West, determined him not to invade Italy. This was in the year 452. Two years after, Genseric, king of the Vandals, arrived at Rome, which he found without defence: Leo went out to meet him, and persuaded him to be content with the pillage, and to abstain from burnings and murders. He returned into Africa with many thousand captives. This circumstance gave occasion to an exercise of the Christian grace of charity, worthy to have a place in these annals.

Ravages of
Attila.

After a long vacancy, Deogratias was ordained bishop of Carthage in the year 454, at the desire of Valentinian, the Roman emperor, and as it seems by the connivance at least of Genseric. The captives of the latter were divided among his followers, who separated husbands from wives, and children from parents. The heart of Deogratias was moved with compassion; and to prevent these disorders, he undertook to redeem the captives by the sale of all the vessels of gold and silver belonging to the churches. As there were no places large enough to contain the multitude*, he placed them in two great churches, which he furnished with beds and straw, giving order for their daily accommodation with all necessaries. He appointed physicians to attend the sick, and had

Deogratias
ordained
bishop of
Carthage,
A. D.
454.

* Vict. Vit. B. i.

nourishment distributed to them in his presence by their directions. In the night he visited all the beds, giving himself up to this work, notwithstanding his age and infirmities. He lived only three years in his bishopric, was endeared to the memory of the faithful by his virtues; and while Arians performed military exploits, and dealt in blood, this follower of Augustine honoured the real doctrines of the Gospel by acts of meekness and charity. It is thus that we still trace the real church of Christ, and see the connexion of principles and practice in the disciples of the Lamb. The sight of so much goodness was too much for Genseric; he took care to suffer no more such bishops, and, in process of time, the orthodox bishops in Africa were reduced to three.

Several godly persons, after a variety of hardships and tortures, came into the hands of Capsur, a Moorish king, the relation of Genseric. These being arrived at the desert where he lived, and seeing there a number of profane sacrifices, began by their discourse and manner of life to bring over the Barbarians to the knowledge of God, and gained a great multitude in a country where the name of Jesus had not yet been heard of. Desirous of establishing the Gospel there, they sent deputies, who having crossed the desert, arrived at a Roman city; for some part of Africa still remained connected with the Roman empire. The bishop sent priests and ministers, who built a church, and baptized a great number of Barbarians. The Pagan king informed Genseric of these transactions, who, incensed at the zeal of these pious men, condemned them to death. The converted Moors bewailed themselves; and the martyrs as they passed by, said to each of them, Brother, pray for me: God has accomplished my desire; this is the way to the heavenly kingdom.

Genseric ordered the bishops to deliver up the

sacred vessels and books ; which they refusing, the Vandals took them by force, and plundered every thing. Valerian, bishop of Abbenza, above fourscore years of age, was driven alone out of the city, and all persons were prohibited from lodging him in their houses. He lay naked a long time in the public road, exposed to the weather, and thus expired for the faith of Christ.

The Orthodox celebrating Easter in the church of a town called Regia, the Arians assaulted and massacred them. Genseric ordered, that none but Arians should serve in his family, or in that of his children. A person named Armogastus, in the service of Theodoric, the king's son, was treated with a variety of insults, till death put a period to his sufferings.

Another, named Archinimus, was flattered by Genseric himself, and was promised immense wealth, if he would receive Arianism ; but his constancy was invincible, and Genseric having given secret orders to the executioners, that if he showed undaunted courage at the moment of execution, his life should be spared ; he by this means was suffered to live.

Satur, steward of * Huneric's house, was very free in his censures of Arianism. Being accused, he was threatened with the loss of all his property, and was further told, that his wife should be married to a keeper of camels if he persevered. His wife, who had several children and a sucking infant, entreated him to comply. He answered, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh †. Let them do what they will, I must remember the words of the Lord, Whoever doth not leave wife, or children, or lands, or houses, cannot be my disciple." They stripped him of all, and reduced him to beggary.

Genseric afterwards ordered the great church of Carthage to be shut up, and banished the ministers :

* Huneric was the son and successor of Genseric.

† Job ii. 10.

Rome taken
by Odoacer,

A. D.

476.

and wherever his arms prevailed, he made the people of God to feel his fury. The whole empire of the West, indeed, was falling into ruin. Odoacer, king of the Heruli, made himself master of Rome in the year 476, and though he was afterwards obliged to give way to the victorious arms of Theodoric the Goth, yet Roman emperors have ceased in Italy ever since*. Africa, we have seen, bowed, under the yoke of the Vandals; Spain, and a great part of Gaul was held in subjection by the Goths; the other part of Gaul was subjugated by the Franks, who, in process of time, became masters of the whole country, which from them bears the name of France; and the southern part of Great Britain was overpowered at length by the Saxons. These were idolaters, and the small remains of the ancient Britons, Christians by profession, retired into the inaccessible mountains of Wales. The poverty of the northern parts of the island was their security. And we must be content to leave the fruits of the labours of Germanus, Palladius, and Patrick, in a very low state, till we shall have occasion to speak of the conversion of the Saxons. The Franks also were at present idolaters; the Barbarians, who ruled in the other parts, were Arians, though it does not appear that any of them persecuted the faithful with so much rage as the Vandals did. Evaric, king of the Goths in Spain, seemed ambitious to tread in the steps of Genseric: he forbade the ordination of bishops in the room of those who were deceased, and sent others into banishment. The churches fell into decay, and congregations seldom assembled. Indeed it was a very gloomy season with the Western church in general. The wrath of God was evidently poured out on the churches for mer-

* I have not thought it worth while to mention particularly the emperors of the West since the death of the great Theodosius, as they are all characters very feeble or obscure, and no way interesting in church-history.

cies long abused ; but there were those who, by the principles of divine grace, were enabled in patience to possess their souls, and to evidence that the real church was far from being extinguished.

Among the stars that illuminated this disastrous period was Sidonius of Lyons*. He was one of the noblest families in Gaul, and was a celebrated orator and poet. About the year 472, he was, contrary to his wishes, appointed bishop of Clermont, in Auvergne. His liberality was highly laudable, and even before he was bishop he did frequently, unknown to his wife, convert his silver plate to the use of the poor. His brother-in-law †, Ecdicius, was remarkably distinguished for the same virtue. The Goths having ravaged the country during the scarcity occasioned by a grievous famine, which was added to the national afflictions, Ecdicius collected 4,000 of both sexes, whom he lodged in his houses, and nourished during all the time of the scarcity. Patiens, bishop of Lyons, also extended his bounty to the remotest parts of Gaul. The providence of God was remarkable in tempering the miseries of the Christians, in these times, by raising up such exemplars of munificence. Patiens possessed the pastoral character in a great degree, and reclaimed many of the Burgundian Arians. His virtues were admired by Gondebaud, the Burgundian king, who resided at Lyons.

Sidonius
of Lyons
made bi-
shop of
Clermont,
A. D.
472.

The bounty
of Patiens,
bishop of
Lyons.

A council was held in Gaul, from the confused account of which it appears that Semi-Pelagianism was still very prevalent there ; nor is it to be wondered at, if we consider the little light of the Scriptures which now remained in the church.

* I dare not, however, rank this man among the ornaments of the Church of Christ. I find him continually with princes and emperors, writing their panegyrics, and absorbed in secular politics. Of his evangelical taste and spirit, I know no sufficient evidence.

† Fleury, P. xxix. 36.

Death of
Genseric,
A. D.
477.

Genseric dying in the year 477, was succeeded by his eldest son Huneric *. He began his reign with a mild aspect toward the faithful, and, after an interval of twenty-four years, permitted them to ordain a bishop of Carthage, but under this condition, that the Arians at Constantinople should have the same liberty, which those of the general church had at Carthage. The people protested against the condition, and with good reason, because the power was out of their hands, and they said, "we will not accept a bishop on such terms. Jesus Christ will govern the church, as he has done hitherto." But Huneric disregarded the protestation; and Eugenius was elected bishop of Carthage.

The virtues
of Eugenius
bishop of
Carthage.

All mankind soon bore witness to his virtues. The revenues of the church were indeed in the hands of the Arians; but large sums were every day brought to him, all which he faithfully distributed to the needy, and reserved to himself no more than daily bread. The Arian bishops soon murmured; they represented him as a dangerous preacher, and expostulated with Eugenius himself for suffering persons to hear him who wore the Vandal habit, which was, it seems, at that time perfectly distinct from the Roman. God's house, he replied, is open to all, without respect to persons.

Huneric who had only complied thus far with the inclinations of the Roman Christians in his dominions, to oblige the court of Constantinople, where the emperor of the East reigned, began gradually to show the ferocity of his spirit. Fearing that he should lose his Vandals, if they attended the preaching of Eugenius, he ordered guards to watch at the doors of the church, who, when they saw a man or woman in a Vandal habit, struck such persons on the head with short staves jagged and indented, which, being twisted into the hair, and, drawn back with sudden violence, tore off both the

* Victor Vit. B. ii.

hair and skin*. Many suffered extremely by this means; women, who had been thus treated, were led through the streets, with a crier going before, to exhibit them to the people. The faithful, however, remained firm; and those who belonged to Huneric's court could not be induced to receive Arianism. He deprived them of their pensions, and sent them to reap corn in the country. As these persons had been educated like gentlemen, the punishment was equally severe and reproachful. But they bore the cross for the sake of Him who gave himself for them.

Victor, bishop of Vita, to whom, as an eye-witness and fellow-sufferer, we are indebted for the history of this memorable persecution, relates some visions, which were looked on as preludes of the horrible desolations which approached. We may pass by these without any loss to the reader, and also without any impeachment of the general credibility of the historian. Huneric at first ordered, that none should hold any office who was not an Arian. He afterwards confiscated the possessions of the rejected orthodox, and banished their persons into Sicily and Sardinia. He seized the consecrated virgins, and treated them with excessive cruelty and indecency, with a view to extort evidence from them against the bishops. But nothing could be drawn from them to suit the tyrant's purpose, though many died under the torments.

Huneric afterwards banished pastors and people, to the amount of four thousand nine hundred and seventy-six, into the desert. Felix, of Abbirita, had been bishop forty-four years, and by the palsy had lost his speech, and even his understanding. The faithful, compassionating his case, implored the king, that the old man might be allowed to end his days quietly at Carthage. Huneric, as if he had been ambitious to outstrip the Pagan emperors in

Persecu-
tions of
Huneric.

* Fleury, B. xxx.

persecution, said, " Let him be tied to wild oxen, and be so carried, where I ordered ;" on which, they tied him across a mule like a piece of timber. These Christian heroes were conducted to the two cities of Sicca and Lares, where the Moors were directed to receive and conduct them into the desert. They were at first confined in a prison, where their brethren were allowed to have access to them, to preach, and to administer the Lord's supper. Some young children were of the number, several of whom were tempted by their mothers, to admit Arian baptism ; but OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES AND SUCK-LINGS STRENGTH was ordained, and they continued faithful.

The guards were soon after severely chastised for granting these privileges ; none were permitted to visit the prisoners ; they were thrown one upon another, and, for want of room, could not withdraw, to comply with the necessities of nature. The effect of this was horrible beyond description. Some of their brethren found means to enter unobserved among them, and of these was Victor, our author, who sunk up to the knees in the ordure. How strong was that grace which caused them patiently to endure, rather than free themselves by unfaithfulness !

The Moors at length ordered them to march. They went out on the Lord's day, their clothes, their heads, and their faces covered all over with filth, and they sang as they went, " Such honour have all his saints." Cyprian, bishop of Uniziba, comforted them, and gave them all he had, wishing for the honour of being carried with them. This was not granted him at present. He afterwards was confined, suffered much, and was sent into banishment. There is a voice in man which speaks loudly in favour of suffering innocence. The whole country resounded with the cries and groans of the people, flocking to behold them, and throwing their

children at their feet. Alas, said they, to whom do you leave us? Who shall baptize these children? Who shall administer the Lord's supper to us? Why are not we permitted to go with you? Among the rest, a woman was observed leading a child by the hand. Run, my boy, said she, observe what haste these holy men make to receive the crown. Being reproved for desiring to go along with them, she replied, I am the daughter of the late bishop of Zurita; and I am carrying this child, who is my grandson, lest he be left alone, and the enemy draw him into the snares of death. The bishops, with tears in their eyes, could only say, God's will be done. As they travelled, when the aged or the young, who wanted strength, were not able to advance, the Moors pricked them forward with their javelins, or threw stones at them. Such as were not able to walk were tied by the feet, and dragged along. Many died in the march; the rest arrived at the desert, and were fed with barley, nor were even allowed this after a season.

In the year 483, Huneric sent an edict to Eugenius, with orders to read it in the church, and dispatched couriers with copies of it through Africa. The purport of the Edict was, after upbraiding the faithful bishops for their zeal in spreading their doctrines, to command them all to appear at Carthage, to dispute with the Arian bishops on a certain day, and to prove their faith, if they could, by the Scripture.

Edict of
Huneric,
A. D.
483.

The most alarming words were, "resolving not to suffer any scandal in our provinces." The bishops interpreted them to mean, that he would not suffer any who professed the doctrine of the Trinity to remain in his dominions. They therefore drew up a remonstrance, containing in substance a petition, that Huneric would send for the bishops who were beyond the seas. Huneric, regardless of the remonstrance, persecuted the most

Huneric
banishes
Donatians.

learned bishops under various pretences. He banished the bishop Donatian, after giving him an hundred and fifty bastinadoes. He treated others also with great cruelty, and forbade any of his sect to eat with the faithful.

On the first of February, the day appointed for the conference, the bishops resorted to Carthage from every part of Africa, and from all the islands subject to the Vandals. Huneric, for many days, made no mention of the conference, and separated those of the greatest abilities from the rest, that he might put them to death on false pretences. One of the most learned, named Lætus, he burned alive, with a view of intimidating others. At length, when the conference was opened, the orthodox chose ten of their own number, to answer for the rest. Cirila, the chief of the Arian bishops, was seated on a magnificent throne, with his partisans sitting in an exalted station, while the orthodox continued standing below. The latter saw what a mock-conference it was likely to prove, and remonstrated; the Arians ordered one hundred bastinadoes to be given to each of them. May God look down on the violence that is offered us, said Eugenius. Cirila finding them better prepared than he imagined, made use of several cavils to avoid the conference. The orthodox foreseeing this, had prepared a confession * of faith, in which the Trinitarian doctrine is very explicitly declared, and which concludes thus: "This is our faith, supported by the authority of the evangelists and apostles, and founded upon the society of all the general churches through the world; in which by the grace of God Almighty, we hope to persevere till death."

The Arians, incensed at this confession, reported to the king that the orthodox had raised a clamour, to avoid the conference. The tyrant had taken his measures; orders were sent through the provinces,

* Victor, B. iii.

by virtue of which the churches were all shut in one day, and their revenues given to the Arians. He allowed the orthodox till the first of June in the same year, that is, 484, to consider whether they would merit pardon by a retractation.

Such were the measures made use of to obliterate the doctrines of divine grace in Africa, where they had been so gloriously revived by Augustine. Huneric ordered the bishops to be expelled from Carthage, stripped them of horses and changes of raiment, and forbad, under terrible penalties, any one to give them victuals or lodgings. The bishops remained without the walls of the city, exposed to the weather; and meeting accidentally with the king, they all came to him: "Why, say they, are we treated thus?" He looked with fury, and ordered some armed horsemen to ride in among them, who wounded many.

Cruelties of
Huneric.

Huneric could not but be conscious that his conduct was no less absurd than iniquitous. On second thoughts, he ordered them to go to a place called the Temple of Memory, where they were shown a paper rolled up, and were required to swear to what was contained in it. Are we like beasts, void of sense and understanding, cried two of them, that we should swear at a venture, without knowing what is contained in the paper? In the issue, of four hundred and forty-six bishops, who came to the conference, forty-eight died, many of them, probably, through hard usage; forty-six were banished into Corsica, three hundred and two into other places; and most of the rest made their escape.

Among those sent into exile was Vigilus, of Thapsus, a man famous for his writings. To prevent the persecution from being more fierce, he composed a number of treatises under the names of some of the most renowned fathers, as he himself acknowledged with regard to several of them. The celebrated creed, called that of Athanasius, is ascribed

Vigilius
exiled.

to him *. He appears to have meant well ; but the artifice was extremely culpable ; and partly by his practice, and partly by his example, he has caused much confusion and uncertainty in the works of the fathers. Vigilus himself retired to Constantinople.

Further
cruelties of
Huneric.

Huneric, as if the very soul of Galerius had been assumed by him, pursued his sanguinary designs with vigour. He sent executioners among the laity, who whipped, hanged, and burned alive the faithful. Eugenius, before he left Carthage, had written a strenuous letter, to warn his flock : and it must be owned that many of them gave the noblest proofs of sincerity. Donyisia, while she was scourged, and the blood was streaming from her body, said, “ Ministers of the devil, what you now do to confound me with shame (for they had stripped her naked), is my glory ;” and she exhorted the rest to suffer martyrdom. Looking severely at her son, whom she saw dreading the torture, “ Remember, son, said she, that we have been baptized in the name of the Trinity. Let us not lose the garment of salvation, lest the Master should say, Cast them into outer darkness.” The young man upon this suffered death with constancy : and she thanked God with a loud voice, embracing his body. Many suffered with her, strengthened by her exhortations †.

The sufferings of many others were very dreadful ; it is even painful to write or read the narratives. A woman called Victoria, with amazing constancy supported her cruel tortures, unmoved also by the entreaties of her husband, who besought her to pity their common children.

Victorian, of Adrumetum, was at that time go-

* I have wondered why persons, who love not the doctrine of the Trinity, should triumph so much on account of this circumstance. If the sentiments of the creed be defensible by Scripture, the name of Vigilus cannot disgrace them ; if they be not, that of Athanasius can do them no honour.

† Victor, B. v.

vernor of Carthage under the king. He was the wealthiest man in Africa: to gain him over to Arianism was to gain a prize; and Huneric assured him of his particular favour, if he would submit to be re-baptized, and renounce the Trinitarian creed. "Tell the king," said he, "if there were no other life after this, I would not for a little temporal honour be ungrateful to my God, who hath granted me the grace to believe in him." The king, incensed at an answer truly christian, tormented him grievously; and thus he slept in Jesus. At Tambaia, two brothers continued a whole day suspended, with large stones fastened to their feet. One of them, overcome with the torture, at length desired to recant, and to be taken down. "No, no," said the other; this, brother, is not what we swore to Jesus Christ: I will testify against you, when we come before his awful throne, that we swore by his body and blood, that we would suffer for his sake." He said much more, to rouse and encourage him; at length his fellow-sufferer cried out, "Torment as you please, I will follow my brother's example." The executioners were quite fatigued with torturing them by hot irons and hooks, and at length dismissed them, remarking that every one appeared ready to follow the example of the two brothers, and that none was brought over to Arianism.—I see still the marks of the true church patiently suffering for the truth's sake, and victorious in suffering.

At Typasa, the secretary of Cirila was ordained bishop by the Arians. The inhabitants seeing this, transported themselves into Spain, as the distance was but small: some, who could meet with no vessels, remained in Africa. The new bishop laboured by courtesy to win their favour; but they, in contempt of his ministry, assembled themselves in a private house for public worship. Huneric hearing of this by a message from the bishop, ordered their tongues to be cut out and their right hands to be

CHAP.
XI.A miracu-
lous inter-
position.Proofs of
the miracu-
lous inter-
position.

cut off, in the public market-place. He seems to have permitted them to retire to Constantinople, but to have been determined to prevent their open confession of the Trinity. Shall I, in compliance with modern prejudices, throw a veil over the rest, or shall I proceed according to historical veracity?—*IMPERIOSA TRAHIT VERITAS*. A miracle followed, worthy of God, whose majesty had been so daringly insulted, and which must at that time have much strengthened the hearts of the faithful, who needed indeed some peculiar consolations amidst such scenes of horrible persecution. The miracle itself is so well attested, that I see not how it can be more so. The reader shall have both the fact and its proofs. Though their tongues were cut out to the root, they spake as well as before. “If any one doubt the fact, says Victor of Vita, let him go to Constantinople, where he will find a sub-deacon, called *REPARATUS*, one who was thus treated, who speaks plainly, and who has a particular respect shown him in the palace of the emperor Zeno, especially by the empress.”

Æneas, of Gaza, a Platonic philosopher, a cautious and prudent person *, was at that time at Constantinople, and writes thus in the conclusion of his Dialogue on the Resurrection: “I myself saw them, heard them speak, and wondered, that their utterance could be so articulate. I searched for the organ of speech, and not trusting my ears, was resolved to have the proof of the eyes. Causing them to open their mouths, I saw that their tongues were plucked out even by the roots, and was then more surprised, that they could live, than that they could speak.” Is this sufficient evidence? Hear more:

* Gibbon (*Decline of Rom. Emp.* vol. iii. c. xxxviii.) is struck with this evidence, in conjunction with that of the rest. Yet he intimates that the infidel’s suspicion is incurable. Does he allude to himself? To what purpose does he say so, if he does not? If he does, what is this but to deny all reasonable evidence, and confess himself to be unreasonable?

Procopius, the historian, in his History of the Vandalic War *, says, Huneric ordered the tongues of many to be cut out, who were afterwards seen in the streets of Constantinople when I was there, talking without any impediment, or feeling any inconvenience from what they had suffered. Count Marcellinus, in his Chronicons, says, " I have seen some of this company of faithful confessors at Constantinople, who had their tongues cut out, but spake nevertheless without any imperfection in their utterance." To name only one more witness : the great emperor Justinian, in a Constitution published by him for Africa, after it had fallen into his dominion, testifies, that he had beheld the same †.

Numbers were maimed in various ways. Some lost their hands, some their feet, others their eyes, their noses, or their ears. Dagila, wife of one of the King's cup-bearers, though nobly born and brought up tenderly, was severely scourged and banished into a desert, joyfully forsaking her house, husband, and children.

Seven monks of Capsa having been persuaded to come to Carthage, flattered with fair promises and the royal favour, showed, however, THAT THEY HAD ANOTHER SPIRIT in them. Inflexibly firm in the profession of the Trinity, and disappointing the hopes of Huneric, they were martyred by his orders.

The whole clergy of Carthage, after having been almost starved with hunger, were exiled. Elpidiphorus, who had been baptized into the faith of the Trinity, and who had had for his sponsor the deacon Muritta, was more active than others in tormenting the faithful. As they were preparing to stretch Muritta on the rack, the venerable aged person suddenly drew out, from under his robe, the linen with which he had covered Elpidiphorus at his coming out of the font, and spreading it in the view of the whole

* B. 1. c. viii.

† B. 1. Cod. de Off. Afr.

company, he said to the apostate, who sat as his judge, "Behold the linen which shall accuse you at the coming of the great Judge, and shall cast you headlong into the lake of brimstone, because you have clothed yourself with cursing, by renouncing the true baptism and the faith." Elpidiphorus was confounded, and unable to answer. Two Vandals, who loved the faith, accompanied by their mother, forsook their wealth, and followed the clergy into banishment. Theucarius, an apostate, advised the Arian governors to recall some of the young children, whom he, according to his office, had taught to sing the service of the church, and whom he knew to have the best voices. Messengers were sent to recall twelve, who, weeping and holding the banished clergy by their knees, refused to leave them. They were separated from them by force, and were brought back to Carthage. But neither flatteries nor the bastinado could cure them of their attachment. These, after the persecution was over, were held in high estimation in the church. The Arian bishops went every where armed with swords, accompanied by their clergy. One, named Anthony, distinguished himself by his cruel treatment of Eugenius of Carthage, who was his prisoner, and whose life he in vain attempted to destroy by repeated severities. Another bishop, called Habet Deum, was bound by him hand and foot. Anthony, stopping his mouth, poured water on his body. "My brother, said the Arian, unbinding him, you are now a Christian, as well as we; what should hinder you in future, from obeying the will of the king?" "While you were stopping my mouth, I made," said the holy confessor, "a protestation against your violence, which the angels have written down, and will present to God."

The barbarity was general: persons were stopped on the highways, and brought to Arian bishops, who re-baptized them, and gave them certificates, to prevent their suffering the same violence

again. None were permitted to pass from place to place without these certificates. The Arian clergy went, even in the night time, with armed men into houses, carrying water with them, with which they sprinkled persons in their beds, crying out that they had made them Christians. They put the physician Liberatus, and his wife, into separate prisons; when somebody informed the latter, that her husband had obeyed the king. "Let me see him, says she, and I will do what is well-pleasing to God." They took her out of the prison to her husband, to whom she said, taking him by the throat, "Unhappy man, unworthy of the grace of God, why will you perish eternally for a transitory glory? Will your gold and silver deliver you from hell-fire?" "What is the matter, wife, he replied; what have they been telling you? I am what I was by the grace of Jesus Christ, and will never renounce the faith."

Cresconius, a presbyter of the city of Myzenta, was found dead in a cavern of mount Zica. Various persons of both sexes fleeing from the persecution, suffered thus through cold and hunger.

At length, after an horrible reign of seven years and ten months, in which time the church was purged by as severe a persecution as any ever known, in the year 485 died the tyrant Huneric of a disease, in which he was corroded by worms,—a signal monument of Divine justice! Gontamond, his nephew and successor, stopped the persecution, and recalled Eugenius to Carthage. In the year 487, a council was held at Rome, with Felix, the bishop, at its head*, in which were forty bishops of Italy, four of Africa, and seventy-six priests. The rules of penance, prescribed by this synod, on occasion of the late persecution, partook partly of the prevailing superstitions, and partly of the primitive strictness of discipline. Clergymen, who had suffered themselves to be re-baptized, were deprived not only of the mi-

Death of
Huneric
the tyrant,
A. D.
485.

Council at
Rome,
A. D.
487.

* Ep. 7. Felix.

CHAP.
XL.

Odoacer
mastered by
Theodoric,

A. D.

493.

Epiphanius
and Victor
commissioned to
redeem the
captives in
Burgundy,

A. D.

494.

nistry, but even of lay-communion, till their death. Other articles breathe the same severe spirit; yet I rejoice, amidst the excess of discipline, to find, that real religion was honoured. One rule of the council deserves to be mentioned for its good sense: ‘ No clergyman shall receive into his city the penitent of another bishop, without his certificate in writing.’

In the year 493, Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, now complete master of Italy, after he had ruined Odoacer, made a law to restrain all the adherents of the latter from making a will, or disposing of their estates. All Italy was alarmed, and Epiphanius, bishop of Pavia, was applied to, that he might intercede with the king. Lawrence, bishop of Milan, joining with him, they went together to Ravenna, where Theodoric resided*. Epiphanius obtained favour for all, except some few leaders of the party. Theodoric, who had before honoured and experienced the virtues of Epiphanius, discoursed with him in private, and said, “ You see the desolations of Italy; the Burgundians have carried away captive a number of the inhabitants; I wish to redeem them; none of the bishops is so proper as yourself, undertake the embassy; I shall order what money is necessary for you.” Epiphanius accepted the commission on condition that Victor, bishop of Turin, might be his companion. In the year 494, Epiphanius passed the Alps; all the people came out to see him, and brought presents, which he distributed among the poor. Arriving at Lyons, where Gondebaud, the Burgundian king, resided, he advised him to dismiss the captives without ransom. It seems astonishing, that one Arian king should negotiate with another of the same sect, by means of a Trinitarian; but it is just to notice these things, that the reader may not suspect all Arians to have had the spirit of Eusebius, of Nicomedia, or of Huneric, the Vandal. The

* Ennodius Vita. Epiph.

true triumphs of real godliness and virtue, in softening the miseries of human society, appear in these transactions of Epiphanius. Let philosophers say that this was all the effect of superstition: it is my duty to show, that even in a superstitious age, godliness did exist, and did perform what mere superstition could not; and philosophy should stop her mouth, when it is remembered, that she seldom ever did so much good to society, as the Christian religion did, even when discoloured by superstition.

Gondebaud, who was no stranger to the character of Epiphanius, restored to him without ransom all the prisoners, except those who were taken armed, they being the property of the captors. Six thousand were sent away without ransom; and Theodoric's money, aided by the liberality of Syagria, a lady of quality and of good works, and of Avitus, bishop of Vienne, redeemed the rest. Epiphanius travelled to Geneva, to obtain the release of the captives there, and was equally successful with Gondegisilas, the brother of Gondebaud. He returned into Italy with troops of redeemed captives, and easily obtained for them from Theodoric the recovery of their lands.

This excellent person was born at Pavia in the year 438. From early life he was devoted to divine services, and, at twenty years of age, was ordained deacon. He was made bishop at the age of twenty-eight; and it must be confessed that he gave himself wholly to the service of God and the good of mankind. He was often successfully employed in public affairs. In the year 474, he had been sent by Nepos, at that time emperor of the West, to Evaric, king of the Visigoths, then residing at Toulouse, though after the Visigoths were ejected from Gaul, they resided in Spain. Epiphanius negotiated a peace with Evaric successfully, but refused an invitation to dine with him, because he was an Arian. In 476, Odoacer, making himself master of

Epiphanius
was born at
Pavia,

A. D.
438.

Italy, Epiphanius, by his intercession, obtained the deliverance of a number of captives; and with no other fund, than the supplies of Providence, he repaired the city of Pavia, which had been pillaged, and rebuilt the churches. When Theodoric entered Italy in 489, Epiphanius came to him to Milan, and was courteously received. He still softened the horrors of war during the contest between Odoacer and Theodoric, and did good to all, even supporting those who had pillaged his lands. In the year 496 he died, being fifty-eight years of age.

He died,
A. D.
496.

About this time decretals of Gelasius, bishop of Rome, were published: a few of them relating to ordination* will deserve to be mentioned. “He, who is taken from a monastic life, may be ordained priest in a year’s time; but he must not be illiterate; he, who cannot read, can only be a door-keeper. All laymen that shall be ordained shall have six months probation; and cannot be admitted priests till after eighteen months. Bishops are forbidden to receive, much less to promote, such clergymen as pass from one church to another.”

Death of
Gelasius,
A. D.
496.

Gelasius† himself seems to have been an ornament to Christianity. He died in the year 496. He composed a treatise against some Romans, who had a desire to re-establish the ancient superstition of the Lupercalia‡. “I forbid, says he, any Christian to practise these superstitions: leave them to heathens.

* Fleury, B. xxx. Sec. 34.

† Fleury, B. xxx. 41.

‡ Gibbon, in vol. iii. c. xxxvi. Decline, &c. is pleased to accuse Gelasius of absurd prejudice, because he supposed those who were for still preserving the festival of the Lupercalia to be only nominal Christians. After having told the less learned reader, that this festival was an ancient piece of idolatry, in honour of the idol god Pan; that young men, and even magistrates ran naked through the streets; that they—modesty forbids me further to explain the indecencies of the ceremonies; suffice it to say, that the whole was calculated to encourage libidinous vices—I would ask such a writer, whether those, who were for still preserving this abomination, could be any more than nominal Christians; whether he knows any evil more severely and

I think it my duty to declare to Christians, that they are fatal. I doubt not but my predecessors solicited the emperors to abolish this abuse; they were not heard, and this ruined the empire."—It appears hence how slowly and stubbornly the old idolatries departed out of Christendom. The testimony of Gelasius deserves our attention, because his manners were holy. He was incessantly employed in prayer, reading, writing, or business, and in conversation on spiritual things with godly men. Idleness and luxury were equally avoided by him; negligence in a bishop he esteemed dangerous to souls; and his liberality to the poor was unbounded. To all this, it may not be quite insignificant to add, that he composed hymns after the manner of Ambrose.

About the year 496, Clovis, king of the Franks, was baptized, and received into the general church. He himself, perfidious, ambitious, and cruel, was no honour to any religious denomination. But some remarkable circumstances of Providence attended his reception of Christianity; which will therefore deserve a place in these memoirs. The Franks, or French, were a German nation known long before; who dwelt about the lower Rhine. Having passed this river, they entered into Gaul, under the conduct of Pharamond, their first king, about the year 420. Clodio, Merovæus, Childeric, and Clovis, reigned in succession after him. Like the rest of the barbarous nations, who desolated the lower empire, they still advanced gradually in conquests, and Clovis ruined the Roman power entirely in Gaul. But he had to contend with other barbarous invaders, all of whom, however, he subdued at length, and by much carnage and violence he became the founder of the French monarchy.

Clovis
baptized,
A. D.
496.

A. D.
420.

more constantly condemned in Scripture than idolatry; and, lastly, whether the expression "harmless festival," (it is Gibbon's) does not fasten on him, who uses it, the charge of impudence, or ignorance of Scripture, or malévolence against the word of God.

Wicked as he was, he was fitted to become an useful instrument of Providence, like Henry VIII. of England, many ages after. He had married Clotilda, niece of Gondebaud, king of the Burgundians; she was zealous for the doctrine of the Trinity, though both her uncle and the whole nation of the Burgundians professed Arianism. Could her private history be known, it would probably be instructive and edifying. For what else could induce a royal lady, brought up among heretics, and given in marriage to a powerful Pagan, to persevere alone so firmly in the apostolical faith, but the grace of God and the effectual operation of his Spirit, in an age when divine truth had scarce a single patron of great power in Europe *?"

Having a son by her husband Clovis, she endeavoured to persuade him, to permit the child to be baptized, and earnestly reasoned with him on the vanity of his idols, and preached Christianity to him with much sincerity. Clovis, who, it seems, had great affection for his queen, consented at length to the baptism of the infant; but he died a few days after. Clovis in a rage declared, "I have lost my child, because he has been devoted to your deities; had he been devoted to mine, he would have lived." The pious queen answered, "I thank God, who has thought me worthy to bear a child, whom he has called into his kingdom." She had afterwards another son, who was baptized by the name of Clodomer. On his falling sick, the king said, "Yes, I see he will die like his brother, because he has been baptized in the name of your Christ." The mother prayed for his recovery, and the child was restored to health. Clotilda persevering in her exhortations, Clovis heard them, patient, but still inflexible. It pleased God at length to give him a striking lesson, from which he ought to have learned

* Greg. Tur. 11. hist. c. xxvi.

the true art of happiness. Fighting with the Alemanni, he was upon the point of being entirely defeated. Finding himself in the utmost danger, he lifted up his eyes to heaven with tears, and said, "O Jesus Christ, whom Clotilda affirms to be the Son of the living God, I implore thy aid. If thou givest me victory, I will believe and be baptized; for I have called upon my own gods in vain." While he was speaking, the Alemanni turned their backs, and began to flee, and at length submitted and craved quarter.

Penetrated with a sense of Divine goodness, as many wicked men have been for a time, Clovis submitted to the instructions of Remi, bishop of Rheims, whom the queen sent to teach him. The chief difficulty he started was, that his people would not follow him in his change of religion. This was obviated by the facility with which they received Remi's lessons. What the lessons were, and what exercises of mind and conscience attended the change, we know not; the external circumstances and forms alone we are informed of, and they are not very instructive. The king himself was baptized at Rheims, and so was his sister, and three thousand of his army. He was at that time the only prince who professed orthodox Christianity. Anastasius, the Eastern emperor, favoured heresy; the rest of the European princes were Arians. Thus a woman was employed as the instrument of a change in her husband; it is true the change was only nominal, but it was followed by very signal effects in Europe, namely, by the recovery of the apostolical faith, and no doubt by the happy conversion of many individuals.

In the year 494, Gontamond, the Vandal, still increasing his kindness to the church, opened all the places of public worship, after they had been shut ten years and a half, and, at the desire of Eugenius,

Gontamond
favours the
Christians,

A. D.

494.

recalled all the other bishops. He died in the year 496, and was succeeded by his brother Thrasamond.

AND here I finish the general history of the West, for this century. Much, both of Divine providence and of Divine grace, appears in it. Superstition had grown gradually in this and the former century. Relics, and various other instruments of the same class, were fast advancing into reputation. The monastic solitudes were strongly calculated to augment these evils: and, in the writings of various pious persons, the unguarded and very injudicious addresses to martyrs, which occur frequently, and which were rather rhetorical flights than real prayers, countenanced exceedingly the growing spirit of apostasy. Every new ceremony, while men were in this frame, strengthened the superstitious spirit, and rendered them less disposed to depend on the Saviour, that is, as the apostle says, **TO HOLD THE HEAD***, in the faith and love of the Gospel. Had it not been for the great and solid revival of the doctrine of grace in this century, the wholesome effects of which continued all along in the West, Christianity itself, humanly speaking, would have been in danger of total extinction. The intelligent reader will admire the providential and gracious goodness of the Lord, in preparing, furnishing, and giving success to the important labours of Augustine, through which so many in Africa were enabled to glorify their Saviour by faithfulness to death, under a severe persecution. The despised, desolated church, at once overborne by heretics, and by barbarous Pagans, still lived in Italy, Spain, France, and Britain, to the end of the century, when Providence raised up a Clovis to support that, of which he himself, however,

* Coloss. ii. 19.

knew not the value. We leave the church in Italy and Spain, only tolerated, but mildly treated, particularly in the former; in Britain, confined to the mountains of Wales and Cornwall; in France, ready to rise again into eminence; and in Africa, just recovered from a dreadful scourge, in which she had gloriously suffered. The changes of a secular kind, though very great in all this period, and alone moving the hearts of worldly men, could not destroy the Church, whose root is not in the world. The patience of the godly was exercised by them, the sins of the Church were scourged, and the Gospel was communicated to Barbarians. The general current of corrupt doctrine was strongly set in: idolatry was too deeply rooted in men's hearts, to be eradicated from any, except those who were Christians indeed, and we shall ere long see it established in the formality of public worship. Nothing, however, had hitherto happened, but what had been predicted. The persecutions of the Church*, the short interval of peace†, and the desolations of the empire which succeeded‡, had all been revealed to St. John. And it may deserve to be remarked, that even amidst all this degeneracy and decay, whoever chooses to compare Christian emperors or priests with Pagans in similar situations, will find a great superiority of character in the former. The meliorating of the condition of slaves, the abolition of tortures, and of other cruel or obscene customs, the institution of various plans for the relief of the poor, and the general improvement of the order of society, are to be attributed in a great measure to the benevolent influence and operation of the Christian religion.

* Rev. vi.

† Ib. viii. 1.

‡ Ib. viii.

CHAP. XII.

THE EASTERN CHURCH IN THE FIFTH CENTURY.

CHAP.
XII.

THE life and transactions of Chrysostom have introduced us into this scene already, and prepared us to expect no very great work of the Spirit of God. The vices which tarnished the West, were superstition, polemical subtilty, and monasticism. These same vices, meeting with little or no check from the revival, which took place in Africa, and spread a benign influence through the Latin churches, prevailed in the East almost universally, and each of them in a much higher degree; yet here and there, the Spirit of God condescended to move amidst the chaos, and it is our duty to watch and discern his operations.

Death of
Arsaces,
bishop of
Constanti-
nople,

A. D.
405.

Arsaces, who was very old, and who had been appointed bishop of Constantinople in the room of Chrysostom, died in the year 405. In the next year Atticus, who had been a principal agent in the persecution of Chrysostom *, succeeded him. He seems a person extremely well adapted to an age and metropolis of formal and decent religion, neither so zealous as to give offence by his animadversions, nor so dissolute as to excite disgust by his immoralities. He understood mankind, had good sense; and though he had little learning †, yet he possessed the art of showing off that little to the best advantage. So

* It is very possible this expression may be too strong. The authority for it rests with Palladius, p. 95. The panegyric biographer of Chrysostom might easily magnify the courtly connivance of Atticus into positive persecution.

† Socrates contradicts this; he will have it, that Atticus had much learning, piety, and prudence. I doubt not but he was largely possessed of the last quality. The consideration of the taste and spirit of an author, will explain these contradictions. Decency and good sense, not much of zealous godliness, appear to have been predominant in Socrates.

exquisite a courtier as he, would naturally gain over large numbers of the discontented ; yet there were some, who chose rather to meet for worship in the open fields than to communicate with Atticus. This bishop used to compose sermons, which he recited from memory ; at length he ventured to preach extempore, but he was not admired from the pulpit.

Atticus was certainly a person of a candid temper and beneficent disposition. It had been the custom to mention with honour the names of former bishops in the church ; and, with a view to conciliate the friends of Chrysostom, he took care to have his name mentioned among the rest. He distributed alms to the poor of other churches besides his own, and sent three hundred pieces of gold to Calliopius, a presbyter of Nice, for the use of such poor as were not common beggars, but persons who were ashamed to beg, and also for the poor of any other communion besides that of the general church *. He said to Asclepias, bishop of the Novatians, “ You are happy, who have for fifty years been employed in the service of the church ;” and, on all occasions, he behaved with kindness to these dissenters, and very justly owned their faithfulness to the common cause of Christianity in the days of Constantius and Valens. Were all this liberality of sentiment and practice founded on Christian faith and love, it would doubtless be highly laudable in Atticus : such as he is, in virtues and vices, I have represented his character, and must leave him to that Being to whom judgment belongs. He died in the twenty-first year of his bishopric.

During the reign of Theodosius the younger, the son and successor of Arcadius, the Christians in Persia were persecuted grievously, says Theodoret † ; were kindly protected, and allowed to propagate the Gospel there, says Socrates ‡. Very circumstantial

* Socrates, B. vii. c. 25. † Theod. B. xi. c. 39.

‡ B. vii. c. 8.

details are given by both writers, perfectly conformable to this opposition of accounts. As both the writers were well informed and credible, I judge, that both accounts may be true in different periods of the reign of Isdegerdes ; and the more so, as the Persian Magi might have a great share of the king's confidence at one time, and not at another. And, as the persecution was occasioned by the indiscreet zeal of a Christian, it is most probable, that the favourable period was first in order. According to these views, the series of events seems summarily to have been as follows : Maruthas, bishop of Mesopotamia, acquired the favour of the Persian monarch, and, notwithstanding the fraudulent arts of the Magi, almost persuaded him to be a Christian. But toward the end of his reign, a bishop, called Audas, presuming probably on the royal favour, destroyed one of the temples, where the Persians adored the fire. The action was no less contrary to Christian meekness, than to moral prudence, and deserves to be noticed, as a warning to Christians in all ages, to unite the subtilty of the serpent with the innocence of the dove. Isdegerdes, on the complaint of the Magi, who only wanted such an advantage, sent for Audas, and in soft terms complained of the injury, and ordered him to rebuild the temple. Audas refused to comply, and Isdegerdes in a rage ordered all the Christian churches in his dominions to be destroyed. He had not himself any real degree of Christian light, to enable him to make allowances for the misconduct of an individual. Nor did it ever appear more plainly how unequally the Church of Christ contends with the world, since the mistake of one person laid the foundation of a cruel persecution of thirty years. Isdegerdes began it; and his son and successor Vararanes, inflamed by the Magi, afflicted the Christians with outrageous barbarity.

The Magi procured orders to be issued out to the

chiefs of the Saracens, subjects of Persia, to guard the roads, and to apprehend all Christians, that they might not fly to the Romans. Aspebetes, one of those chiefs, touched with compassion at their distress, on the contrary, assisted them in making their escape. Being accused of this at the court of Persia, he fled with his family to the Romans. He took along with him a number of Arabs, who, together with himself, received Christian baptism, and the real church of Christ probably received an accession from this event.

The afflicted Christians implored the aid of Theodosius, and their entreaties were seconded by the humanity of Atticus, the bishop. In the mean time, the Persian king sent to demand that the Christian fugitives should be delivered into his hands. To this the emperor would not consent, and a war was the consequence, in which, so far at least as Christianity is concerned, Theodosius had the advantage. An action of Acacius, bishop of Amida, on the frontiers of Persia, in the course of this war, deserves more praise than any military exploits whatever. The Romans* had taken seven thousand prisoners, whom they would not restore, and who were perishing by famine. The Persian king was much vexed at this, but knew not how to relieve them. Acacius, touched with the distress of the captives, assembled his clergy, and spake thus to them: "Our God has no need either of dishes or cups; since, then, our Church has many gold and silver vessels from the liberality of the people, let us, by means of them, free and relieve these captive soldiers." In effect, he ordered the vessels to be melted down, paid the ransom of the Persians to the Roman soldiers, gave the captives provisions and necessaries for their journey, and sent them home to their king. This was to conquer in a Christian manner. The king desired personally to make his grate-

* Socrates, B. vii. 21.

ful acknowledgments to the bishop, who was accordingly directed by Theodosius to wait upon the monarch.

Theodosius had a reign of uncommon length, forty-one years, though he died at the age of forty-nine. He was a feeble prince, and held the affairs of government with a remiss and negligent hand. The public, however, was benefited by the vigorous wisdom of his sister Pulcheria, who, though only two years older, maintained, by meekness and discretion, that ascendant over him, which superior capacity always gives. I have no great matter before me concerning the real Church of Christ at present; and I am not disposed to add one more history, to the many already published, concerning superstitious and marvellous acts, the fame of which now abounded, especially in the East. Let us look, then, at the court of Constantinople a little, and see if we cannot discern some dim traces at least of the features of the Church.

Pulcheria devoted herself to a life of virginity, before she was quite fifteen, and persuaded her two sisters to do the same. At sixteen she took the title of Augusta, and as she had always the prudence to preserve her brother's honour, she governed in his name with much success; for she was the only descendant of the great and first Theodosius, who possessed any eminence of character. She accustomed her brother to pray frequently, to honour the ministers, and to be upon his guard against novelties in religion. He had the honour of completing the destruction of idolatrous temples and worship. The young emperor rose early to sing with his two sisters the praise of God. He had a great part of the Scriptures by heart, and could discourse of them with the bishops, like an aged minister*. He took great pains to collect the books of Scripture and their interpreters. His meekness and forgiveness of

* Socrates, B. vii. 22.

injuries were exceedingly great. Being once asked, why he never punished with death those who had injured him, "Would to God," he replied, "I could recall the dead to life." To another asking him of the same thing, he said, "It is an easy thing for a man to die, but it belongs to God alone to recover life when departed." His clemency to criminals seems to have been excessive. In compliance with the customs, he exhibited, but with reluctance, the shows of the circus. In the midst of the exhibitions there was once a dreadful tempest; in consequence of which the emperor ordered the criers to warn the people, that it would be much better to leave the shows, and betake themselves to prayer. The motion was accepted: the emperor sang hymns as an example to the rest, and the whole assembly gave themselves up to devotion.

On occasion of good success in his wars, the news arriving while he was exhibiting shows a second time, he persuaded the people, in the same manner, to leave their pleasures, and to join in prayer and praise. He made a law, to forbid in every city even Jews and Pagans to attend the theatre and the circus on the Lord's day, and on certain festivals. He made laws also to prevent the progress of Judaism; but it ought to be added, that he prohibited the molestation of Jews or of Pagans, so long as they lived peaceably under the government. He reduced the penalty of death against heathenism to banishment and confiscation of goods. Such was Theodosius's zeal, which, if it contributed little to the propagation of vital godliness, was doubtless very efficacious in the promotion of external religion.

But, notwithstanding all the encomiums lavished on this emperor, who appears to have truly feared God in the main, it is evident, that the powers of his mind partook of the childish imbecility of his age. A monk, to whom he had refused a favour,

had* the boldness to excommunicate him. Theodosius was so much affected, that he declared he would not touch a morsel, till the excommunication was removed. Though informed by the bishop of Constantinople, that he must not regard so irregular an excommunication, he could not be easy, till the monk was found and had restored him to communion. In what bondage did conscientious persons then live ! but how little reason have those to triumph over them, who live without conscience, and shut their eyes against the light of the Gospel !

Sisinnius succeeded Atticus at Constantinople, by the general desire of the people. He was a man of simple manners, courteous, and exceedingly liberal to the poor, a character much resembling his predecessor.

The virtue of mutual forbearance between the general church and dissenters prevailed beyond doubt at this time ; the prudent and moderate characters of the bishops of both parties, as well as the uncommon meekness of the emperor, contributed much to this†. Could I add to this any clear account of the internal vigorous operations of divine grace, the glory of the Eastern church would have been seldom rivalled : but superstition corroded the vitals of practical religion. One remarkable event, belonging to the reign of Theodosius, deserves, however, to be recorded : a Jewish impostor, in Crete, pretended that he was Moses, and that he had been sent from heaven, to undertake the care of the Christian Jews, and conduct them over the sea. He preached a whole year in the Island, with a view of inducing them to obey his directions. He exhorted

* Theodoret. v. 30.

† Let an instance of this be drawn from the funeral of Paul, bishop of the Novatians, whose corpse was attended to his grave with singing of psalms by Christians of all denominations. The man, for his holiness of life, had been held in universal estimation.

them to leave all their substance, and promised to conduct them through the sea, as on dry land, and bring them into the land of promise. Numbers were so infatuated, as to neglect their business, and leave their possessions to any who chose to seize them. On the day fixed by the impostor, he went before them, and they followed with their wives and little ones. It was a memorable instance of that "blindness*" which has happened to Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," and fulfils the Scripture account of their penal folly. When he had led them to a promontory, he ordered them to throw themselves into the sea. None of them, it seems, had the caution, to insist on his setting the example. Those who were at the brink of the precipice leaped down, many of whom perished, partly dashed against the rocks, and partly drowned; and many more would have perished, had not a number of fishermen providentially been present, who saved their lives. These, enlightened at length by experience, prohibited the rest from taking the leap. And they all now sought the impostor, in order to destroy him: but he had made his escape. Many of the Cretian Jews were on this occasion brought over to the Christian faith.

Two controversies shook the churches of the East in this reign, on which far more has been written than tends to edification. The first was the Nestorian, which was occasioned by the obstinacy of Nestorius, in objecting to a common phrase of the orthodoxy, namely, "Mary the mother of God." He seems to have regarded the union between the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ rather as moral than real, and to have preferred the idea of a connexion between the two natures to an union. As the last century had been remarkable for heresies, raised on the denial of the union of the three Persons in the Trinity, so this was disturbed by heresies,

* Rom. xi.

raised on the denial of the union of the divinity and humanity of the Son of God. Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria, the opposer of Nestorius, seems, on the whole, to have expressed no more than the faith of the primitive church. But the serpentine wits of the East, favoured also by a language of exquisite subtilty and copiousness, found no end in cavilling. Eutyches, the monk, raised a second heresy, which denied the existence of two natures in the person of Jesus Christ. This extreme is opposite to that of Nestorius. How indecently and fiercely these controversies were agitated, how very little of practical godliness was applied to them by any party, and how much the peace of the church was rent, is well known. It belongs only to my purpose, and it is all the good which I can find in general to have resulted from the contests, to mention, that the doctrines of Scripture were stated by the two councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, and by the writings of those who were most esteemed in the church at that time. Such was the provident care of Christ over his Church, in the preservation of the fundamental truths relating to his person, and the union of the two natures in it, that all attempts to remove them from the mind by explaining them according to men's own imaginations, were subverted; and the doctrine was transmitted safe to the Church in after ages, as the food and nourishment of humble and self-denying souls. The writings of Leo, bishop of Rome, are deservedly admired for their strength and perspicuity in clearing up this subject.

A. D.
450.

Theodosius died in the year 450. His sister Pulcheria remaining sole mistress of the Eastern empire, gave herself in marriage, for political reasons, to Marcian, whom she made emperor; nor does it appear that her religious virtues suffered any diminution till her death. Both Marcian and Pulcheria were as eminent for Christian piety as a superstitious age permitted persons of their exalted stations to be;

and Marcian, who survived, died at the age of sixty-five, in the year 457, renowned for his services to religion. The preservation of orthodoxy, the encouragement of good morals, and the destruction of idolatry, were his favourite objects.

CENT.
V.

A. D.
457.

Of his successor Leo, it is remarkable, that he forbade any judiciary proceedings on the Lord's day, or any plays and games. This law bears date 469. At so late a period did the full observance of the most ancient of all divine institutions receive the sanction of human authority*! The same year he made a law against Simony, requiring men to be promoted to the episcopal office without their own choice, and declaring those, who are active in their endeavours for the promotion, to be unworthy of the office.

A. D.
469.

Gennadius, archbishop of Constantinople, died about the year 473. The most remarkable thing I find in him is, that he never ordained any clergymen who could not repeat the Psalter without book.

A. D.
473.

But I am disgusted with the prospect. It grows worse in the East to the end of the century. Doctrinal feuds and malignant passions involve the whole. Possibly in the view of some private and obscure scenes in the next Chapter, the reader may find something more worthy of his attention.

C H A P. XIII.

CHRISTIAN WRITERS OF THIS CENTURY.

THE great luminary of the fifth century has been copiously reviewed. The greatest praise of some of the rest is, that they illustrated and defended the evangelical views of faith and practice through him revived; yet amidst the gloom of superstition we

CHAP.
XIII.

* See Genesis ii.

may discover several rays of godliness, even among persons who had never read the bishop of Hippo.

MARK*, the hermit, lived about the beginning of this century. He wrote on the spiritual life, and describes the conflicts and labours of men truly serious for eternity. Many of the ascetical or mystic writers are tarnished with Semi-Pelagianism. Mark is in the main an humble advocate for the doctrines of grace, and feels the depravity and helplessness of human nature. He describes views of the spirituality of the Law and the grace of the Gospel; and, amidst all his care to promote practical godliness, he protests against the idea of our being justified by our works, as a very dangerous notion. I regret that I can communicate no more of such a man. Even of his country I can find no account, except that he belonged to the Eastern church.

THEOPHILUS, bishop of Alexandria, the unrighteous persecutor of Chrysostom, does not deserve a place in this list, on account of his writings, which are futile, and breathe a worldly spirit. But a reflection he made at the hour of his death may merit the attention of political and ambitious dignitaries of the church. "How happy, said he, art thou, Arsenius, to have had always this hour before thine eyes!" which shows, said a writer of that time, that monks who retire from the world to mourn in the wilderness, die more peaceably than bishops, who go out of their dioceses to disturb the peace of the church by caballing at court. It seems, Theophilus had lived, as if he were never to die.

Paulinus of
Nola, born,

A. D.

453.

PAULINUS, of Nola, if not one of the most learned, was one of the most humble and pious writers of his time. He was born at Bourdeaux about the year 453. He had a classical style and taste, and being of an illustrious family, had advanced to the greatest dignities of the empire. He married The-

* See Du Pin, from whom I derive particular information on subjects of this nature.

Therasia, a rich lady, by whom he obtained a great estate. It pleased God to inspire his wife with the love of heavenly things, and she had great influence in inducing her husband to prefer a retired life before the grandeur of the world. In the prosecution of this scheme there was as much of genuine piety, and as little of superstition as in any saints of these times. He gradually parted with his wealth, and observed in one of his epistles, that it was to little purpose for a man to give up his worldly wealth, except he denied himself; and that a man might renounce the world heartily, who did not part with all his riches. The people of Barcelona in Spain, where he lived in retirement, conceived so great an esteem for him, that they insisted on his ordination. He writes thus on the occasion to a friend: “On Christmas-day, said he, the people obliged me to receive the order of priesthood, against my will: not that I have any aversion to the office; on the contrary, I could have wished to have begun at the porter’s order, and so have gradually risen into the clerical; I submitted, however, to Christ’s yoke, and am now engaged in a ministry beyond my merit and strength.—I can scarcely yet comprehend the weight of that dignity; I tremble, when I consider its importance, conscious as I am of my own weakness: but he that giveth wisdom to the simple, and out of the mouths of sucklings perfects praise, is able to accomplish his work in me, to give me his grace, and to make me worthy, whom he called when unworthy*.”

* This humble and serious language is the obvious effect of a spirit truly conscientious, deeply sensible of the holiness of God, and its own unworthiness. There is not any thing, in which primitive piety appears to more advantage, when compared to modern religion, than in a review of men’s conduct with respect to the pastoral office. In our times it frequently happens, that youths, who have really a religious cast, fancy themselves adequate to the most important of all offices, before they have attained the age of twenty. Parents also too often look on their dullest children, as competent to the sacred function; and it is much to be feared, that worldly lucre is the spring that

Paulinus
ordained
bishop,
A. D.
409.

Dies,
A. D.
431.

After this he lived sixteen years at Nola, in privacy, where at length he was ordained bishop in 409. The incursions of the Goths disturbed him for some time ; and on this occasion it was that he prayed in the manner that his friend Augustine tells us, that the Lord would not suffer him to be tormented on account of worldly goods, as he had long been weaned from them in his affections. It pleased God, that after the assault of Nola by the Goths was over, he peaceably enjoyed his bishopric till his death in 431.

This holy person was intimately acquainted with Alipius, bishop of Tagasta, whom we have already celebrated as the townsman and friend of Augustine. Through this connection he became acquainted with the writings of the bishop of Hippo, which were peculiarly adapted to the taste of one, who, like Paulinus, knew what indwelling sin means. Hence arose a very peculiar friendship between the two bishops, cemented by their common interest in the privileges and doctrines of the Gospel.

His letter to Amandus gives an excellent view of his divinity, which he illustrates both from the Old and New Testament, much after the manner of the bishop of Hippo. In writing to Delphinus, who had been dangerously sick, he speaks of the benefit of afflictions to the righteous, as they exercise their godliness, keep them from pride, and imprint in them the fear of divine justice, which will dreadfully confound the ungodly, since it so severely chastizes the righteous.

Paulinus was intimate with Sulpicius Severus, the historian, who was a priest of Agen, a person of noble birth, fine talents, and much superstition ; a disciple of Martin of Tours. That he could unite so much elegance of the Roman language with so much childishness of thought, forms one of those incongruities which animates many to press into the ministry, who never had any charity for their own souls.

sistencies, which abound in human nature. And yet there want not here and there in his History marks of good judgment, and every where a spirit of piety prevails. Paulinus, comparing Sulpicius's conversion with his own, prefers that of his friend, "because, said he, in one of his letters, he had at once shaken off the yoke of sin, and broken the bands of flesh and blood in the flower of his age; and at a time when he was renowned at the bar, and in the career of worldly honour, he despised human greatness, that he might follow Jesus Christ, and preferred the preaching of fishermen before all the pieces of Ciceronian eloquence."

Severus had desired to have Paulinus's picture. The bishop of Nola refused, and called his request a piece of folly. He takes occasion, however, to give a picture of his own heart. Here is one passage of it, much admired by Augustine*: "How should I dare to give you my picture, who am altogether like the earthly man, and by my conduct represent the carnal person? On every side shame oppresses me. I am ashamed to have my picture drawn as I am, and I dare not consent to have it made otherwise. I hate what I am, and I am not what I would wish to be. But what avails it me, wretched man, to have evil and love good, since I am what I hate, and sloth hinders me from endeavouring to do what I love? I find myself at war with myself, and am torn by an intestine conflict. The flesh fights against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. The law of the body opposes the law of the spirit. Wo is me, because I have not taken away the taste of the poisoned tree, by that of the saving cross. The poison communicated to all men from our first parent by his sin yet abideth in me †."

* Ep. 86 of Aug.

† All this is the peculiar language of a Christian, arising from just views of indwelling sin in its nature and its constant influence. Paulinus describes from the heart such things as none but a truly enlightened mind can know: for original sin is not

In a letter to Florentius, bishop of Cahors, the reader may perhaps find an objection obviated, which might arise from the last article, namely, How can a man, who finds himself so miserable, enjoy any consolation? "Jesus Christ, says he, is the rock containing that spring of living water, which we happily find not far from us, when we are very thirsty in this world: this is that which refreshes us, and prevents us from being consumed by the heat of concupiscence. This is the rock on which the house is founded, that shall never fall. This is the rock, which being opened at the side, cast out water and blood, to make us taste of two wholesome fountains, the water of grace, and the blood of the sacrament, which proves at once both the source and the price of our salvation."

In another letter to Augustine, he discourses on the felicity of the saints after the resurrection: "All their employment shall then be, to praise God everlastingly, and to give him continual thanks."

This holy bishop was the delight of his age. He led a retired and temperate life, but with no great austerity, singularly remarkable for the tenderness of his conscience, the meekness of his spirit, and a constant sense of his own imbecility, and of the need of divine grace.

ISIDORE, of Pelusium in Egypt, spent his whole life in the monastic state, and he did honour to a course of life by no means the wisest. He lived in the practice of serious piety, and, by a number of known at all, except by experience. I need not say to the evangelized reader, how consonant this language is to that of the best men in the Old Testament, and in the New. And, although decent Pharisees may be inclined to think it excessive, I will add, that it is even too faint for the occasion. Every real Christian knows that no words can sufficiently describe the strength of internal corruption. Hence humility, the faith of Christ, the preciousness of the Gospel to the mind, and all the true holiness which is exercised under the sun; and uniformly it appears, that men who know the most of native wickedness, are the most holy in their lives and conversations.

letters which he has left, he appears to have known the world much better, and to have been more useful to the Church, and to society, than might have been expected from a monk.

He observes on the Holy Scriptures, that there is a divine wisdom in ordering some things to be very plain, and others obscure, at once to encourage our investigation, and to check our presumption. He gives good rules for the exposition of Scripture, guards against fanciful interpretations of concise expressions, where the connexion has not been considered, and teaches us not to attempt to draw the mysteries of the Gospel from every passage of the Old Testament. He agrees with the orthodox in the great doctrines of the Gospel; his views of divine grace are sound in the main, but escape not the taint of Semi-Pelagianism, which seems to have prevailed over the Eastern church: the doctrine of the African luminary never making any great progress among the Greek churches.

His conduct on occasion of the Nestorian controversy was admirable. He endeavoured to heal the ferocious spirits of the disputants, and condemned the tempers of those, whose doctrines he yet admitted to be sound.

The great excellence of this writer is his practical rules. For a specimen, take his advice to a physician who lived wickedly. "You profess a science requiring much wisdom; but you act inconsistently: you cure small wounds for others, and heal not your own distempers, which are great and dangerous. Begin at home."

CASSIAN was a monk from his childhood, and spent the latter part of his life at Marseilles. He has been before mentioned as the father of Semi-Pelagianism. His plausible views of moderation led him into inextricable confusion. He allows that grace is necessary even for the beginning of faith. Yet he affirms that man can naturally choose good, but needs

Cassian the
Monk.

grace to accomplish it. He thinks that sometimes grace, and sometimes the will of man, is the first mover. The cases of St. Paul and St. Matthew seem to him to illustrate the first position; those of Zaccheus and the penitent thief the second. In such endless jargon is a sensible man involved, while he vainly mixes opposite things, and forgets the Scripture declaration, "if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." Yet his system has since been adopted by many of the more decent sort of Christian professors, and will, whatever may be said, recommend itself to all of them, who are unacquainted with the entire depravity of human nature. In him, Semi-Pelagianism found a very powerful guardian, because his learning and morals were unquestionably respectable. And it happens in this case, that a system which discovers its absurdity and extreme inconsistency to every man endued with any real degree of self-knowledge, exhibits a most plausible appearance in theory, and seems to shun the opposite rocks of self-righteousness and Antinomianism. So* it pretends; "but wisdom is justified of her children."

* Cassian wrote monastic rules and institutions, in which he teaches "for doctrines, the commandments of men." He instructs the poor monks in the duties of implicit submission, and of voluntary humility, by which their understandings would rather be enslaved, than any true mortification of sin acquired. In nothing does the system of Augustine triumph more sensibly over that of Cassian, than in this point of view. I conceive these two men both engaged in the design of leading men to a holy life. With superstition they both were infected. But in Cassian the fashionable evil prevails, reduces itself into a system, and leads the devotees into a tedious number of artificial externals, with an intention to break the human will, and force it into something like virtue. What, for instance, can be more absurd than his directions to the young probationer, to subject himself absolutely to the will of his superior in the convent? To submit to orders in a manner impossible to be executed, to endure hardships and crosses, without any reason but the arbitrary will of a master? Follies which, in the papacy, have continued for ages after. But see Augustine. His system leads him to stem a torrent of superstition; to

CŒLESTINE bishop of Rome, has already been noticed as supporting Prosper and Hilary, disciples of Augustine in Gaul, against the intrusions of Semi-Pelagianism. He reprov'd those French bishops who favoured the doctrines of Cassian, and he published some articles concerning grace, of which a summary has already been given. The earnestness of his manner shows that he felt what he said; and his testimony to the bishop of Hippo deserves to be recorded. "We have always had Augustine, of blessed memory, in our communion, whose life and merit is well known; his fame hath been unblemished, and his knowledge is so indisputable, that my predecessors have looked upon him as one of the most excellent teachers of the Church. All orthodox Christians have ever thought well of him; and he hath been generally revered through the whole world."—The church of Rome, though at this time much degenerated from primitive purity, must not, however, be deemed antichristian, while the real doctrines of Christ were supported in it. And though secular ambition was gradually making its way among her bishops, yet some of them were real good men and faithful pastors; and I am willing to believe that Cœlestine was of the number.

See the zeal and uprightness of this bishop, in the subject of episcopal ordination. A person, named Daniel, who had come from the East, retired into France. The monastery where he lived accused him of scandalous crimes. Yet he had the address to get himself ordained a bishop in that country. Cœlestine, in vain, had endeavoured to prevent this. He blames the bishop who had ordained him, and declares, that he had lost the episcopal dignity himself by ordaining one so unworthy. It does not attempt, at least, to emancipate Christians from the yoke of bondage: to teach true, not fictitious, internal, not merely external, humility: to lead the soul to Christ, to instruct men in love, to enforce Christian practices from spiritual motives: in fine, to aim at purity of heart, and heavenly-mindedness.

pear that he fulminated a decree of excommunication against him. The superior dignity of the bishop of Rome in the Western world was hitherto rather founded on the opulence of the see, and the civil importance of the city of Rome, than on any positive claims of dominion. Cœlestine's conduct was more like that of a Christian bishop than of a pope. He found fault with the conduct of the hierarchy in France, in raising at once to the episcopal office laymen who had not gone through the several gradations of the priesthood. He † decrees, that when a bishop is to be chosen, the clergy of the same church, whose characters are known, and who have deserved well, be preferred to strange and unknown clergymen; that a bishop be not imposed on any people against their consent, but that the votes and agreement of the clergy, people and magistrates, be followed; that no clergyman be chosen out of another diocese, when there is any one in the same church fit to be ordained bishop.

The same soundness of judgment, which led Cœlestine to oppose interested ordinations, and the undue interference of secular ambition, induced him also to oppose the democratic spirit, as appears from his letter to the bishops of Calabria and Apulia, whom he forbids to ordain laymen bishops on the demand of the people. "When this demand is against the rules of the Church, it should never be complied with ‡."

The three contemporary Greek historians, who continued ecclesiastical history, where Eusebius

* Fleury, B. xxiv. 56.

† I use reluctantly the word Decree, because for some time the admonitions of the bishop of Rome had gone by the name of Decretals; though certainly as yet, bishops, out of Italy at least, were not under his jurisdiction. However, the imperative style of the Roman bishops at this time is indefensible, and intimates the too great growth of their power.

‡ Cœlestine succeeded Boniface I. A. D. 423: died in 432. He sent Deputies to the third General Council held at Ephesus, in June 431.

ended; through the fourth and part of the fifth century, are Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret of Cyrus. I have made use of them all along, and find them particularly serviceable, where I have not the much more satisfactory lights of the fathers themselves, whose transactions are recorded. The first is doubtless a judicious writer, remarkable for his candour to the Novatians, and for a generous peaceable temper. Neither he nor Sozomen furnish us with sufficient documents, from which a decisive judgment of their own personal characters may be formed. The latter is less judicious, and very fond of monks. The third, however, surpasses all men in admiration of monastic institutions, and is credulous beyond measure in subjects of that nature. Yet was he himself one of the most learned and best men in the Eastern church. His pacific conduct displeased the bigots, during the noise of the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies. It is evident, that his own views were orthodox; but because he inclined to healing methods, he was condemned at one of the synods, and was not without difficulty reinstated. Hear him speak in his letter to Leo of Rome, which will give us an epitome of his character and story*. “I have been a bishop these twenty-six years without reproach. I have brought over to the Church above a thousand Marcionites and many Arians. There is not now an heretic in the eight hundred parishes of my diocese. Often have I been assaulted with stones, and have sustained combats with Pagans and Jews.—Reject not, I beseech you, my humble prayer, nor despise my old age, loaded with disgrace, after so many labours. God is my witness, that I am not concerned for my own honour, but on account of the scandal given, and lest several of the ignorant, and particularly of the converted heretics, should look on me as heretical, seeing the authority of those who have

Character of
Theodoret.

Condemned
in the Synod
of Ephesus

Restored at
the Fourth
General
Council
held at
Chalcedon,

A. D.

451.

* Fleury, xxvii. 44.

CHAP.
XIII.

condemned me; and without considering that for so many years of my episcopacy, I have neither acquired house, nor land, nor money, but have embraced a voluntary poverty."

Theodore
born at
Antioch,
A. D.
386.
ordained
bishop of
Cyrus,
A. D.
420.

He was born at Antioch, in the year 386, and ordained bishop of Cyrus, a city of Syria, by the bishop of Antioch, about the year 420. The inhabitants spake chiefly the Syriac tongue, few of them understood Greek; and heathenish ignorance prevailed among them. The most shining part of Theodore's character appeared in his pastoral employments. He laboured, and suffered for the love of Christ, and was often in danger of his life from the rage of the multitude. But God gave success to his endeavours in the manner stated above, and he found, what persevering pastors often find, the love of his people to attend him at his latter end. He resided constantly in his diocese, and no doubt was signally useful in it, by preaching and by example. When called, which was but seldom, by the superior bishop or patriarch of Antioch, to attend his synod, he went and preached on those occasions at Antioch in a manner that left a deep impression. All the time he was bishop, he had no suits at law with any man, nor did he or his clergy ever appear at the judgment-seats. His liberality was unbounded; and in every part of Christian morals he appears to have exhibited that peculiar spirit which none but true Christians are able to do.

The authority of Leo, bishop of Rome, was of service to him in the persecution before spoken of; and he died peaceably in his bishopric; though calumny and prejudice after his death prevailed so far as to procure his condemnation in the time of Justinian. His works are large, on a variety of subjects; but they speak not for him equally with his life; and it will be sufficient to say, that his theology, with a strong mixture of superstition, was of the same

kind as that of Chrysostom. But his spirit was humble, heavenly, charitable; and he seems to have walked in the faith, hope, and love, of the Gospel, a shining ornament in a dark age and country.

LEO, bishop of Rome, was one of the greatest men of his time. In secular affairs, his successful negotiations have already been noticed. In the church, it must be owned that he took much pains concerning matters of discipline; that so far as appears from circumstances, he supported the cause of truth and uprightness in general, though with a constant attention to the amplification of the Roman See. Antichrist was not yet risen to its stature; but was growing apace. He attempted to extend his influence in France, but met with a firm resistance. The celibacy of the clergy was more strictly enforced by him than by any bishop of Rome before. Yet, in Christian doctrine he was not only evangelical in general, but also in a very elaborate and perspicuous manner, so as to evince the pains he had taken to understand the Scriptures. His letter to the Eastern churches, on the divine and human nature of Christ, is allowed to have been remarkably scriptural. He opposed Pelagianism with much zeal; he detected the evasions of its defenders, who made grace the effect of human merits; and he resolved every thing into the grace of God in so full and clear a manner, that if his own heart was influenced by the sentiments which he espoused, he must have been an humble, holy Christian. But his piety was not so unquestionable as his capacity and accuracy of sentiment. Candour, however, will rather incline to impute what is suspicious in his conduct, to the times, than to his disposition. Leo justly reprov'd the great and scandalous violations of order and decorum in the African ordinations of bishops, which preceded the invasion of Genseric. And he has left us several decrees, from which the

Leo made
bishop of
Rome,

A. D.

440.

CHAP.
XIII.

reader may collect what were the ancient ideas of pastoral and ecclesiastical discipline.

“What, says this prelate, can be the meaning of laying hands **SUDDENLY** on any man; but the conferring of priests orders on persons of whose worth we are ignorant,—before we have had time to try them; before they have approved themselves competent by their industry, and have given some tokens of knowledge and experience?”

He is of opinion, that pastors should have passed through all the inferior orders, and have exercised them for some time, before they be appointed bishops.

He declares, that those who have not been chosen by the clergy, nor desired by the people, nor ordained by the bishops of the province, with the consent of the metropolitan, are not to be accounted bishops.

“He ought to be chosen bishop, who is chosen by the clergy and people. In case their judgment be divided, the metropolitan should prefer him who is of greatest worth, and hath most votes. But no man should be appointed bishop whom the people refuse.”

“He, who would go from one church to another, out of contempt of his own, shall be deprived both of that which he hath, and of that which he would have; that he may neither preside over those whom, through avarice, he hath desired, nor those whom, through pride, he hath despised.”

Bishop Leo himself preached and fed his flock at Rome; and a number of his sermons are yet extant. The faith of the church, concerning the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, was not neglected in the course of his ministry. This was still the prevailing doctrine, notwithstanding the subtil and manifold opposition made, to it. Leo himself was one of the ablest instruments of its vindication; and whether it is probable that he was so only in a speculative manner, let the reader judge from the following passage of his ninth sermon on

the Nativity. "For unless faith believe, that both substances were united in one person, language explains it not; and therefore matter for divine praise never fails, because the abilities of him who praises never suffice. Let us rejoice, then, that we are unequal to speak of so great a mystery of our mercy; and when we are not able to draw forth the depth of our salvation, let us feel that it is good for us to be vanquished in our researches. For no man more approaches to the knowledge of the truth, than he who understands, that in divine things, though he makes much proficiency, something always remains for him to investigate."

Leo dies,
A. D.
461.

HILARY, bishop of Arles*, was the successor of Honoratus in that see. The latter was abbot of the monastery of Lerins†, an isle of France, famous in those days for its monks. He took pains to draw Hilary into serious Christianity, which in these times was too much connected with the monastic life. Honoratus himself was afterwards chosen bishop of Arles, and his disciple Hilary was unanimously elected to succeed him. Hilary has left us the life of Honoratus; in which he vindicates the custom of writing encomiums on deceased holy men. He says, with a happy inconsistency, for he must be considered as a Semi-Pelagian, "God is praised in his saints, as all their worth and excellency ought to be imputed to the Author of Grace." An excellent sentiment, and truly Christian! Let it only be firmly and consistently maintained, and let it influence the heart; men then must be humble, the grace of

Hilary,
bishop
of Arles.

* This is not the Hilary, who, in conjunction with Prosper, supported in France the doctrine of Augustine, concerning grace. His sentiments approach more to Semi-Pelagianism; yet he deserves a place in these memoirs, because he held, implicitly at least, the fundamentals of divine truth; was truly humble and pious; and evidenced to all men, that he was a sincere member of the Church of Christ.

† Now called St. Honorat, or Honore de Lerin.

Christ must engage their whole dependence; and they, who hold in sentiment the doctrines of Cassian, will only be found to be illogically defective in their arguments, not unsound in their practical views. However, the fashionable prevalence of the sentiments of Cassian in France, and the plausible support which they received from several highly respected characters, besides Hilary of Arles, would no doubt have a pernicious effect on the minds of the next generation.

No fault can be found with Hilary's writing the life of a saint. But the manner of his doing it, though unhappily by no means singular, is to be blamed. With him, Honoratus is all excellency, and looks more like an angel than a man. Suffice it just to mention the circumstances of his exit. He fell into a languishing distemper, which yet hindered him not from executing his priestly office. He preached in the church in the year 429, but his disease increasing, he died a few days after. Hilary bears witness to the piety of his last hours, having been present with him.

Honoratus
ies,
A. D.
429.

The life of Hilary himself is written, it is supposed, by Honoratus*, bishop of Marseilles, with the same partial exaggerations. Yet some circumstances are mentioned which bear strong marks of credibility. He often admonished in private the governor of the city, whose conduct had been very faulty, and seeing him one day come into church with his guards, he brake off in the midst of his discourse, and said, that those, who disregarded private admonitions, were unworthy of public. It is recorded, to the praise of this bishop, that, though he knew how to address the most polished auditory, and occasionally showed great literary powers, he could, however, adapt himself in the plainest manner to the apprehensions of the vulgar: a rare, but precious talent of a preacher, and surely more dependant on the

* See page 546 of this Vol.

heart than the head. The labours of this holy person were very great, and in preaching he was so zealous, that he was obliged to check himself by a sign agreed on, lest he should carry his discourse to too great a length. Prosper candidly allows, that his life and death were holy. Leo, of Rome, who had an unhappy quarrel with him in his lifetime, spake honourably of him after his death. I have only to regret that I have it not in my power to gratify the reader with more particulars of the labours and works of so pious a man, and so zealous a preacher.

Hilary
died,
A. D.
449.

VINCENTIUS, of the same monastery of Lerins, was likewise renowned for his piety. He left behind him a treatise on the marks of heresy. With him, besides the testimony of Scripture, universality and antiquity are added as essential and concurring requisites of the evidence of orthodoxy; and though popery can by no means stand the test of these, (for it had not as yet properly existed in the church,) it has notwithstanding availed itself of his rules, and pressed them into her service.

Vincentius
of Lerins.

EUCHERIUS, of Lyons, is another of the same stamp, and his excellent life and death are attested by Prosper.

Eucherius
made bi-
shop of
Lyons,

A. D. 434

Died,

A. D. 450

PROSPER, of Ries in Aquitain, was a layman who distinguished himself in this century in the defence of the doctrines of grace. He largely extracted from Augustine's works the fundamentals of his positions; and wrote with much earnestness a defence of them. He was engaged in a laboured controversy with the Semi-Pelagians in France; but controversy, managed with a spirit like his, serious, candid, and argumentative, not abusive and censorious, and conversant on topics of real importance, is an advantage, not a detriment to the cause of true religion. He bears a cheerful testimony to the solid piety of several of his opponents in France, as we have seen already, and appears only zealous for divine truths, and not for any particular party. It

was an advantage to the truth revived by Augustine, that under the cautious and judicious management of Prosper, it was cleared of objections and explained, and rescued from aspersions, without losing any thing of its sterling purity. Of Prosper himself, I can say nothing; except that his writings speak for his piety, humility and integrity. Suffice it to give two or three quotations*, one of which obviates the most specious objections that have been made to the sentiments of Augustine: "Setting aside that distinction which the divine knowledge confines within the secret of eternal justice, we ought most sincerely to believe and profess, that God would have all men to be saved; since the apostle, whose sentence this is, most earnestly directs, what in all churches is most purely observed, that prayer be made to God for all men, whence, that many perish, is the desert of those who perish; that many are saved, is the gift of the Saviour †."

"Let human debility, says he, acknowledge itself, and the condemned succession of all generations in the first man; and when the dead are quickened, the blind illuminated, the ungodly justified, let them confess Jesus Christ their life, and light, and righteousness."

"We act with liberty, but with liberty redeemed, over which God is the governor."

"Grace does more than persuade and teach by kind advice and exhortation; it changes also the mind within, and forms it anew, and from a broken vessel makes it new in the energy of creation. This,

* Pro. Aug. doct.

† The attentive reader has seen this to be the sentiment of the anonymous author of the Calling of the Gentiles. Perhaps no two propositions are more certainly and decisively scriptural than these two of Prosper. It is the vain attempt to clear them of a supposed inconsistency, which has confounded many reasoners. The Church of England has exactly hit this medium in all her public writings. To know where to stop is true wisdom.

not the admonitions of the Law, not the words of a prophet, not nature so studiously preferred to her, performs. He only who made, renews. An apostle may run through the world, preach, exhort, plant, water, rebuke, and be urgent; but that the hearer may benefit by these means, neither the scholar, nor the teacher effects, but GRACE alone.—This orders the seed of faith to take root in the mind, this keeps and cherishes the harvest to maturity.—It is God who raises the dead, frees the prisoners, pours understanding into dark hearts, and infuses love, by which we love him again; and the love which he infuses is himself.”

Once more; hear his vigorous testimony to the entire depravity of nature, from a practical sense of which, he was, I doubt not, led to see the suitability of his views of grace to the exigencies of fallen humanity.

“The mind, which originally had light from the Supreme Light, involves the will in darkness, and leaving the light, chooses to grow black in earthly darkness; nor can it voluntarily lift up its captive eyes on high, because, by the robbery of the tyrant, it hath even lost the knowledge of the greatness of the wound under which it lies prostrate.”

PRIMASIUS was an African bishop, who for some years attended the ministry of Augustine, whose views he followed, as appears from his writings, particularly his comments on St. Paul's epistles. But though he seems conversant in the writings of Augustine and Jerom, he is not a mere copyist, but discovers an original vein of thought, and appears to have been well furnished with polite learning. He says, “Faith is the gift of God, and is infused by the secret inspiration of grace, not by human labour, nor by nature, but by the Holy Spirit.” He vehemently opposes self-righteous sentiments, and defends with much accuracy the genuine doctrines of the Gospel. It is surprising, that of so able a

Primasius
disciple of
Augustine

would in all ages be allowed so to be, if men had a sufficient degree of patient attention to distinguish his positions from the abuses which may be made of them; that the Semi-Pelagian notions have, however, been held by men, whose experience was contradictory to their sentiments, men truly pious and holy; but, that the danger of these notions (as all errors in subjects relating to grace must be dangerous) lies in the bad use, which persons unacquainted with the operations of the Holy Spirit will be sure to make of them. France was at this time divided between the two parties; but as ignorance of true religion increased, Augustine's views of grace grew less and less fashionable, and were confined to particular situations, while wickedness flourished.

I add only, that profaneness has no right to triumph on account of these controversies. Their existence, and the serious and charitable manner of conducting them, showed that real godliness was alive in that country; nor is it probable, that there was, in any part of the world, at that time, more genuine piety than in France. When men are silent on topics of divine grace, when they gladly listen to the sneers of secular writers, who affect to treat all the controversialists with equal contempt, and are content to think so superficially on religion, as to live without any determinate sentiments on the doctrines of Scripture, then is the time when wickedness will reign without a check; and then what is called philosophy will domineer. God hath left such a people, for the present at least, to their own imaginations.

Victor.

VICTOR, of Vita, of whose affecting history of the African persecutions, I have made much use, and who himself suffered for righteousness sake, will deserve to be added to this list.

Gelasius.

Of GELASIUS, bishop of Rome, no more needs to be added to what has been said, than that he wrote zealously against Pelagianism.

JULIAN POMERIUS, a priest in France about the end of this century, deserves attention for his practical works. A few sentences, descriptive of the characters of good and bad bishops and preachers, will show the taste of the times, as well as afford some sentiments not uninteresting to the pastors of this day.

“ A wicked bishop seeks after preferment and riches ; chiefly aims to gratify his passions, to confirm his authority, and to enrich himself. He avoids the laborious and humbling part of his office, and delights in the pleasant and the honourable.” Julian applies to such men’s consideration the views of the 34th chapter of Ezekiel. “ A good bishop converts sinners to God by his preaching and example—lastly, he holds himself fast to God only, in whom alone he puts his trust.”

The difference between a good and a bad preacher he thus lays down : “ The one seeks the glory of Jesus Christ, by explaining doctrines in familiar discourse. The other uses the utmost strength of his eloquence to gain reputation. The latter handles trifles with elaborate language ; the former elevates a plain discourse by the weight of his thoughts.”

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.







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